ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Lord Guthrie

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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

BY

THE LATE LORD GUTHRIE

EDINBURGH
W. GREEN & SON, LIMITED
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FOREWORD

THIS volume is a reprint of an *Edition de Luxe* limited to 500 numbered copies, published in August, 1920, after the death of Lord Guthrie.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF LORD GUTHRIE . . . . . *frontispiece*

SWANSTON COTTAGE . . . . . *page* 3

IS THIS R. L. S. AT 16? . . . . . *facing page* 22

MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON AND HER SON . . . „ 27

R. L. S. AND HIS COUSIN . . . . . „ 28

R. L. S. WITH TWO COUSINS . . . . . „ 28

THOMAS STEVENSON AND HIS SON . . . . . „ 29

THE STEVENSON FAMILY AT PEEBLES . . . . „ 30

INNER HALL OF THE SPECULATIVE SOCIETY . . . „ 32

R. L. S. AS AN ADVOCATE . . . . . „ 36

MRS. R. L. STEVENSON . . . . . „ 42

MR. AND MRS. HENLEY AND DAUGHTER . . . „ 49

R. L. S. IN 1885 . . . . . „ 54

R. L. S. IN 1893 . . . . . „ 55

WINDOW AT SWANSTON WITH R. L. S. INITIALS . . . *page* 64

ST. IVES WINDOW AT SWANSTON . . . . . „ 65

GARGOYLE FROM ST. GILES CATHEDRAL . . . . „ 68

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

13th November 1850—4th December 1894

I

The Point of View

IN forming an opinion of an author's personality, the testimony of those who knew him cannot, of course, be disregarded. But it is still more important to consider what he has himself said, orally, and in writing; in writings intended, and in writings not intended, for publication. Biography, almost always one-sided if not partisan, may speak with the pen of a Boswell, a Lockhart, a Trevelyan, or a Morley, and yet must take a lower room. Yet there is room for the biographer, and for those who are able to speak at first hand from personal knowledge.

Robert Louis Stevenson did not write an autobiography or keep a diary, and he did not make speeches. But he left abundant material for estimating his quality in his essays, tales, travels, and poems, and in his letters, written in earnest and mocking, consistent and contradictory, moods, some with the public judgment in view and some not. And we have authentic reports of his talk.

Mr. Graham Balfour has given us an excellent Life of his cousin; and the world waits for the more detached biography (not from his point of view, still less from Mr. Henley's) which Sir Sidney Colvin alone can write; he has given us a foretaste of it in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. I do not propose to assay Stevenson's genius, or to discuss whether in *Weir of Hermiston* he died

"sounding his top note," to use his own phrase, but, from affection to the man and admiration for the artist, to add a modest stone of personal recollection to the cairn growing, year by year, in honour of his beloved memory.

My Knowledge of Stevenson

Let me first indicate to what extent I can speak from first-hand knowledge. I shall go into details later.

In early days Great Gulfs were fixed between us. Stevenson's father and mother, Tories and State Church people, lived in the New Town of Edinburgh; and Louis went to the Edinburgh Academy. Mine, Liberals and Free Church, lived in the Old Town, and I attended the more democratic High School. Although nearly the same age—he was born in 1850, and I a year earlier—we did not forgather till he was nineteen and I was twenty. Our first talk was in 1870, forty-nine years ago, in the rooms of the Speculative Society, a famous debating and social club, housed in the University of Edinburgh, which we both frequented for three or four years. Fellow-students for the Scotch Bar, we became advocates the same year, 1875.

Ill-health, revolt against Edinburgh conventionality, and disinclination for any profession, other than letters, drove him from Edinburgh to England, France, Switzerland, and the United States. After 1876 or 1877 we did not meet till 1880 or 1881, when he introduced me to his wife in 17 Heriot Row, the house of his father and mother. That same year he stood for the chair of Constitutional Law and History in the University of Edinburgh. The right of nomination to the chair lay with the Faculty of Advocates; and I was asked by his father, Mr. Thomas Stevenson, to nominate Louis. Correspondence with Louis, who was then with his wife on the Continent, and consultations with his father and mother, followed on that request.

In 1886, Stevenson, writing from Bournemouth, introduced his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, and asked me to arrange for the lad's admission to the Speculative Society. Louis'

father died the next year, and thereafter, till Stevenson's death at Vailima in Samoa in 1894, my connection with the

SWANSTON COTTAGE.

Stevenson family was through his mother and his uncle, Dr. George Balfour, the eminent Edinburgh medical consultant.

In 1908 I became tenant of Swanston Cottage, at the

foot of the Pentland Hills, five miles from the Edinburgh Post Office, which had been the Stevensons' summer home for twelve years, from 1867 to 1880. Some time before that I found that Alison Cunningham, Stevenson's old nurse, lived in South Morningside, the Edinburgh suburb nearest to Swanston. At Swanston, and in her own house in Edinburgh, we saw much of Cummy in her later years; and, in connection with her, I had many talks with his aunt, Dr. George Balfour's widow, and correspondence with Louis' widow and stepchildren, Lloyd Osbourne and Mrs. Strong. In addition to correspondence about Cummy, Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson and Mrs. Strong wrote me about passages in certain books, published in this country and the United States, which they thought did injustice to Louis' memory.

It was thus my good fortune, from personal friendship with Stevenson himself and with those in his family and social circle who most influenced him, as well as from intimate acquaintance with his early surroundings and his early friends, to be able to form, for what it is worth, a personal judgment of the man. I cannot honestly claim, more than others, that I was free from the bias caused by his personal fascination, and by such kindness, and even affection, to myself as made it difficult to turn anything but "a warm side" towards him. But I had one advantage over most of his friends, in that I differed from him in politics, civil and ecclesiastical, and, to some extent, in our ideas of personal conduct. Yet he expressed our relation quite accurately in a letter to me, dated from Bournemouth, 18th January 1880, which ended thus: "I remain, my dear Guthrie, your old comrade, Robert Louis Stevenson." All his friends of early days, a fast-diminishing band, will agree in the description of Stevenson, which became a proverb in Samoa: "Once Tusitala's friend, always Tusitala's friend."

And now for some general considerations which, right or wrong, necessarily colour my view of Stevenson as a man.

Every man's character and every man's career can be

treated broadly or narrowly, generously or grudgingly. Some of Stevenson's Edinburgh contemporaries, who do not like to admit that their eyes were holden, have nothing to tell about him even now, except his seeming idleness, his long hair and his rusty velveteen coat, his restless manner, his volubility, and his all-round revolt against the conventions of Edinburgh society, some of them wholesome conventions and others unnecessarily cramping.

These people are full of tales of his youthful freaks and follies. Could anything be more provincial, narrow-minded, short-sighted? I frankly confess I had not the vision, in college days, to foresee his future fame. I do not know that anybody had, except perhaps his mother and Cummy. But I can at least claim that I never mistook the husk for the kernel. The stories about his follies and the follies of his more immediate coterie, the true stories with a foundation in fact, but all of them grossly exaggerated and distorted, and the false stories, I knew them all. But I never doubted that he had the root of the matter in him; that, with all his surface frivolity and seeming pliability, if it came, in life's crucible, to a question of principle, a clear issue of right and wrong, Stevenson would prove as good as gold and as true as steel.

On a difficult question of discretion and prudence, or of legal right, there are many men I would have consulted sooner than Louis Stevenson; but on a nice point of personal honour, or on a question of generous treatment, I would unhesitatingly have placed myself without reserve in his hands.

Stevenson cannot be understood unless the abnormal strength of three elements in his elusive nature receive adequate recognition—the primitive or aboriginal element, the boyish element, and the Bohemian element.

His choice of Samoa as a residence, about which I shall have something more to say later on, will illustrate the first of these elements. When asked why he selected a place

so remote from books and literary friends, he said: "As regards health, Honolulu suited me equally well—the Alps perhaps better. I chose Samoa instead of Honolulu for the simple and eminently satisfactory reason that it is less civilised." At another time he said that "this business of living in towns was counter to the vagabond instincts that preferred a sack in the woods to a bed in a grand hotel!"

With the Bohemian element I shall deal presently.

Of the boyish element Andrew Lang truly observed: "Stevenson was always a child, and always a boy. He never lapsed from the child's philosophy:—

> "'The world is so full of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.'"

His own view was the same. At Saranac, in New York State, referring to his futile efforts to make the penny whistle a vehicle for musical enjoyment, he wrote: "I always have some childishness on hand."

He was fond, in familiar converse, of small jokes, practical and verbal. His letters are full of them. Mrs. Henley gave me a letter to her husband, in which he breaks off, in the midst of serious discourse, into a skit on his faithless correspondents, especially Henley himself, and Sir Sidney Colvin, then Slade Professor at Cambridge:—

> "All men are rot, but there are two—
> Sidney, the oblivious 'Slade,' and you—
> Who from that rabble stand confest,
> Ten million times the rottenest.
>
> "When I was sick, and safe in gaol,
> I thought my friends would never fail.
> One wrote me nothing; t'other bard
> Sent me an insolent post card."

The Lessons of his Life

Looking broadly and sympathetically at Stevenson's career, apart altogether from his personal charm, anything

that may have to be entered on the debit side of the account will never balance his courage and his high sense of duty.

His courage! His whole life, what Mr. Edmund Gosse called "Stevenson's painful and hurrying pilgrimage," was a triumph of the spirit over the flesh. It was not a mere question of bronchial affection, leading to infirm health. He was in the grip of hæmorrhage of the lungs all his days; he walked in the shadow of death from boyhood to the grave. "Death had set her Broad Arrow" on him, as his favourite author, Sir Thomas Browne, put it. But he was never the slave of ill-health; it neither mastered him nor corrupted him. With splendid intrepidity he faced round on death, again and again, and beat him off. And in the end, after leading death a dance round the world, he got his wish, that he might die, as he put it, "with my clothes on."

In 1885, when staying in the Riviera, he had violent hæmorrhage from the lungs. He was unable to speak, and he wrote on a paper for his wife: "Don't be frightened. If this is death, it is an easy one." She ran for the drug which was only to be used in dire extremity. But she was too excited to measure out the dose. He took the bottle and the minim glass, dropped the prescribed quantity with perfectly steady hand, drank it off, and handed bottle and glass back to her with a smile.

Take another instance. "The Requiem," in two verses, is engraven in letters of bronze—the best bit of poetry he ever wrote—on his tomb on the precipitous peak of Mount Vaea in Samoa, 1300 feet above Vailima, alongside the thistle and the hibiscus, and with the words of Ruth to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people." We all know the lines:—

"Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live, and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

"This be the verse you grave for me:
'Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.'"

When these haunting verses are read or sung, let us remember that, when he wrote them, he was lying in a half-darkened room, forbidden to speak. His right arm was in a sling, for fear of a return of hæmorrhage on that side: and he could only write with his left hand.

"Presence of mind and courage in distress,
Are more than armies to procure success."

Stevenson's life was one long illustration of Dryden's lines. In face of such heroic scenes, and of his imperishable services to humanity, how contemptible all the chatter about youthful eccentricities and follies! In a letter to Baxter, George Wyndham called him "a grand comrade against adversity, a complete foul-weather friend."

Let us rather thank God for a Scotsman through whom, as through Scott and Burns, the world has conceived a new admiration and a fresh affection for Scotland. Did not Sir James Barrie say that "R.L.S." were the best-loved initials in the English language!

I cited also his devotion to duty. In a sense he was never free from financial anxieties; expenditure increased in Samoa more than kept pace with increased income. But, except for a brief period before his marriage, the pressing need of ready money for daily bread never injured the quality of his work. He could always afford to be fastidious and deliberate in the selection and execution of his tasks. Yet he had even a stronger motive and excuse for scamping his work: not actual pain, but the weariness, which made the joy of life, and still more the joy of work, arduous to realise. No writing of his was ever scamped. He had as remarkable facility in writing as he had fluency in conversation. But, out of respect to himself, and his friends, and his country, he gave rare honour to his work; he drafted and

redrafted, wrote and rewrote, corrected and recorrected, until he could no more. He knew what it was, as he said, "to go up the great bare staircase of duty uncheered and undepressed." He scorned what would merely pass muster; he strove continually for the perfect; he may even at times have painted the lily, and overfaceted the gem. And he was too sagacious to dream of sustained perfection. "Perfect sentences," he said, "have often been written; perfect paragraphs at times—but never a perfect page!"

There is no more impressive lesson than the laborious drudgery of this brilliant creature, while learning his business, except it be his painful toil expended upon everything to which he put his name. He modestly said: "I have only one feather in my cap; I am not a sloven." Lord Grey's estimate of Lord Morley in *Chambers's Cyclopædia* exactly describes Stevenson's ideal and method: "He feels that only the best is worth an effort, but that this is worth all effort; while indifference, and mediocrity of aspiration, are the greatest curses of mankind." While retaining the characteristic merits of an impressionist sketch, Stevenson put all his thought and reading, and all his power of felicitous phrase, with lavish hand, even into casual letters. You feel that they have not been dashed off while carrying on a conversation, or when he was thinking about something else. This applies as well to intimate notes, such as those written to his old nurse, as to important letters for which he may have anticipated publication. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with all his might.

Will the Stevenson Cult Endure?

That his works will continue to be read, as those of a master of literature, and that interest will continue to be taken in his engaging personality, so physically frail and so spiritually ardent, and in his life-long fight for life, is beyond doubt. But it is equally certain that new essayists, new story-tellers, new poets and letter writers, with romance

and charm associated with their personalities, will arise, and have already arisen, to divide and diminish his fame in future generations, living under different conditions and surroundings.

What will be his future rank? Men's ears have been dulled to the real merits of his delicate music by the trumpeting and drum-beating of some of his idolaters, of both sexes, on both sides of the Atlantic. No reasonable Stevensonian claims for him a place beside Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare. They do not credit him with royal rank, but they claim for him a high place in the aristocracy of literature. Posterity must say whether, and how long, he will continue to wear the duke's strawberry-leaves, and whether and when he must descend to the humbler insignia of the baron! Whatever betide, Richard le Gallienne's lines will never be falsified:—

> "Not while a boy still whistles on the earth,
> Not while a single human heart beats true,
> Not while Love lasts, and Honour, and the Brave,
> Has earth a grave,
> O well-beloved, for you."

One thing is very significant. Stevenson has been dead for twenty-five years. And to-day his works are increasingly bought and read (not necessarily the same thing) both by the cognoscenti and the public in Britain, Greater Britain, and the United States; picturesque characters like Alan Breck, romantic characters like St. Ives, gruesome characters like John Silver, pungent and wise sayings from his essays, and snatches, said or sung, of his verse, are passing into the common stock of proverbial allusion on both sides of the Atlantic, as we see every day in books, magazines, and newspapers, and in our common speech. No mere sentimental interest in a charming personality, struggling manfully against deadly sickness, will account for this wonderful fact, or for the prices paid, in this country and the United States, for his manuscripts, and autograph letters, and first editions.

Suppose he lacked the weight, depth, passion and universal range of the greatest, and was neither, as a novelist, another Walter Scott, nor, as an essayist, another Charles Lamb, he had by universal consent an individuality of his own, and a mastery all his own of a fresh, elastic, and harmonious style, supple and alive, working on matter brilliant, sagacious, humorous, whimsical, tender, and charming, and all so cleared of palpable artifice that no trace remained of his laborious methods of composition.

Where did his Talents Come From?

Did Stevenson get his powers from his father, or his mother, or from both? There is not a more common or a more futile question.

Notwithstanding the far greater power of early surroundings, it is not necessary to deny the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual influence of heredity. In Louis' case a goodly heritage came to him from cultivated and forceful stock on both sides of the house, Stevenson and Balfour.

On the Stevenson side, there was his grandfather, Robert Stevenson (1772-1850), the builder of the Bell Rock Tower, "Ruddy gem of changeful light," as Sir Walter called it, begun in 1807, the first lighthouse ever built on a reef deeply submerged at *low* water. There was his father, Thomas Stevenson (1818-1887), and there were his uncles, Alan Stevenson (1807-1865) and David Stevenson (1815-1886; all three practical lighthouse engineers of world-wide fame, as constructors and as illuminators, and all distinguished by their important contributions to scientific literature—"the ready and the strong of word," as Stevenson called them. Thomas Stevenson, a meteorologist as well as an engineer, was President, and David Stevenson was Vice-President, of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Alan Stevenson, the eldest son, the builder of the Skerryvore Light, was a classical scholar, and well read in French, Spanish and Italian literature. Thomas Stevenson read

Latin authors for pleasure all his life. The three brothers were students of the English classics, and their books and scientific articles are written in a vigorous English style.

On the Balfour side, his grandfather, Rev. Lewis Balfour, D.D., the parish minister of Colinton, had a strong personality. His mother had brains, wit, and culture, and his able and humorous uncle, George Balfour, M.D., LL.D., President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, whom I often met in consultations about cases in Court, commanded the highest confidence of his profession and of the public.

But experts now say that we are as likely to be the reproduction of one of our sixteen great-great-grandparents, or an amalgam of them all, as of either or both our parents! Stevenson, perhaps half in jest, attributed his style sometimes to sedulous cultivation of certain great English and French classics, sometimes to Scots Covenanting writers like Patrick Walker. In truth, he got his powers, where he himself said Robert Burns got those fine manners which astonished Edinburgh society, "from God Almighty!" "They may talk about heredity," he whimsically said; "but, if I inherited any literary talent, it was from Cummy! It was she who gave me the first feeling for literature."

Bohemian or Puritan, or Both?

After my first visit to the United States in 1867, I was naturally met, on my return to Europe, with the question, "What do you think of America?" To which, considering the variety of race, climate, opinions on things civil and sacred, manners and customs in the United States, I answered, when the questioner was one with whom I could take a liberty, "What do you think of Europe?" So with Louis Stevenson, my answer would be: "Which Louis Stevenson? I knew several! The Bohemian, or the Puritan? The Scotsman, or the Frenchman? (nobody would ever have taken him for an Englishman). The will-

o'-the-wisp, or the fixed star? The irresponsible Stevenson of the period of revolt, in whom Henley delighted; or the later Stevenson, whom, as his *Pall Mall Magazine* article showed, Henley was incapable of understanding?" Even his personal appearance strangely varied, according to mood and health. His wife said: "Sometimes Louis looks like an old man of eighty, with a wild eye; and then, at a moment's notice, he is a pretty, brown boy!" And his stepdaughter reports him saying: "I am made up of contradictory elements." Chesterton has called him "a Puritan in fancy dress!" and Henry James "a Scotchman *of the world.*"

There are people who think it impossible for a man to be at once, in any intelligible sense, both a Bohemian *and* a Puritan. According to them, one or other aspect must be a pose. Robert Burns, they say, wrote the *Cottar's Saturday Night* with his tongue in his cheek. I do not share that opinion, although Burns's estimate of women and indiscriminate disregard for their honour lend colour to the suggestion. But in Stevenson's case there is nothing in his character or career to prevent the application of both terms. His extravagant revolt against some of the petty respectabilities of life; his exaggerated contempt for many of the conventionalities and restraints, and the manners and language, of so-called polite society; his indiscriminating thirst for novelty; his fondness, in season and out of season, for the bizarre and the gruesome, the grotesque and the uncanny; his childish inquisitiveness ("insatiably curious in the aspects of life," as he phrased it); his strange relish of rough jests; his tolerance of Rabelaisian and so-called strong language; and his curious liking for queer company, all marked his Bohemian instinct.

> "Custom lay upon him with a weight,
> Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!"
>
> —WORDSWORTH.

On the other hand, the very real individuality which puzzled Henley—he called it "The Shorter Catechist"—

came out from the very first, and persisted to the very end, both in his life and in his writings. The idea of bed-rock Bohemianism, with a Puritan veneer, will not survive a fair reading of Dr. John Kelman's *Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson.* The Scotch Puritan strain is so interwoven with everything he wrote, often coming out in unexpected places, that it is impossible to think of it as an affectation. He had a Scots accent of the mind and the soul, as well as of the tongue. On the other hand, to deny his Bohemianism, or to treat it as a mere pose, is to display ignorance of the man and his books, and of his letters published and unpublished ; it is to burn strange fire on his altar.

The point, an essential one if Louis Stevenson is to be rightly apprehended, was never better put than by his American friend and publisher, Mr. S. S. M'Clure, the original of Pinkerton in *The Wreckers*, so Charles Baxter told me : " There were two men in Stevenson, the romantic adventurer of the sixteenth century, and the Scotch Covenanter of the nineteenth century. He was the sort of man that commanded every kind of affection : admiration for his gifts, delight in his personal charm, and respect for his uncompromising principles. Underneath his velvet coat, his gaiety and picturesqueness, Robert Louis Stevenson was flint. He was so sensitive to the opinion of others that an office-boy could influence him, for the moment. But in the long run, against his own considered judgment, he could not be influenced at all."

Sir Walter Scott has a description, which has been applied to Stevenson :—

> " 'Tis a kind youth, but fanciful,
> Unfit against the tide to pull ;
> And those that with the Bruce would sail,
> Must learn to strive with stream and gale."

Only on a superficial and ignorant view could these lines be considered an adequate or complete portrait of Louis Stevenson.

I shall take three indications of what I call his Puritanic strain. I select first his treatment of his old nurse, Alison Cunningham. There was no posing in his letters to that devout, simple-hearted, Scottish peasant woman, sent to her from the ends of the earth, written without thought of publication, in sickness and in health, in famous and obscure days alike. I doubt if, in the annals of literature, there is another case of such disinterested affection, gratitude, and loyalty. Twelve of these letters, which Cummy gave me, are at Swanston. The earliest was written at the age of twenty, when, as I have said, except his mother and his nurse, nobody thought he would ever achieve distinction. These are not the words of a mere Bohemian, or of a consistent *poseur*: "Do not suppose that I shall ever forget those long, bitter nights, when I coughed, and coughed, and was so unhappy, and you were so patient and loving with a poor sick child. Indeed, Cummy, I wish I might become a man worth talking of, if it were only that you should not have thrown away your pains. . . .

"Next time, when the spring comes round, and everything is beginning over again, if you should happen to think that you might have had a child of your own, and that it was hard you should have spent so many years taking care of someone else's prodigal, just you think this—you have been for a great deal in my life; you have made much that there is in me; and there are sons who are more ungrateful to their own mothers than I am to you. For I am not ungrateful, my dear Cummy, and it is with a very sincere emotion that I write myself your little boy, Louis."

Take another instance of essential Puritanism. Look at his attitude towards Christian missions and missionaries, Protestant and Catholic—a point which has an important bearing also on Stevenson's openness of mind, his candour, and his sound judgment. In a public speech in Sydney, in 1893, he said: "Those who *deblatterate*" (I suppose he means *blether*) "against Missions have only one thing to do, and that is to come out and see them on the spot.

My dear Cummy,

Yes I am a real bad correspondent, and am as bad as can be in most directions

I have been adding some more poems to my book. I wish they would look sharp about it; but you see they are trying to find a good artist to make the illustrations, without which no child would give a Rick for it. It will be quite a fine work, I hope. The dedication is a poem too; and has been quite a long while written, but I do not mean you to see it, till you get the book: Reap the jelly for the last, you Rum, as you would often recommend in former days; so now you can taste your own medicine.

I am very sorry to hear you have been so poorly; Have been any well: it used to be quite the other way. used it not? So

You remember making the whistle at
Mount Chessie? I do not think it was my
Knife; I believe it was yours; but rhyme
is a very great monarch and gives
before honesty: in these affairs, at least
do you remember, at Wanstead, one
autumn Sunday, when the beech nuts
were on the ground, seeing Heaven open?
I would like to make a rhyme of that,
but cannot.

Is it not strange to think of all
the changes: Bob, Graham, Dehi,
Minnie (married and fathers and
mothers, and you humble servant just
the one Joint better off? and such a
little while ago, all children together.
The time goes swift and wonderfully even;
and if we are no worse than we are, we
should be grateful to the power that guides
us. For more than a generation I have now been
to the fore in this rough world, and been
most tenderly helped, and done cruelly
wrong and yet escaped; and here I am
still, the worse for wear, but with some

fight in me still, and not unthankful – no, surely not unthankful, or I were then the worst of human beings!

My little dog is a very much better child in every way: more loving and more amiable. but he is not fond of strangers and is, little most of this Ranch, a great, specious humbug.

Fanny has been ill, but is much better again; she now does drawing rides with an old woman, who compliments her on her French! That old woman – seventy odd – is in a jealous spiritual state.

Pretty soon, in a new sixpenny illustrated magazine, Wogg's picture is to appear: there is a great honour! and the poor soul, whose vanity would just explode if he could understand it, will never be a bit the wiser! – With much love, in which Fanny joins,

Believe me, your affectionate boy

Robert Louis Stevenson.

I had conceived a great prejudice against Missions in the South Seas; but I had no sooner come there than that prejudice was first reduced, and then annihilated. . . . The missionary is a great and beneficent factor."

There must have been a strong strain of Puritanism in the man whose two modern heroes were General Gordon and a missionary, the lion-hearted James Chalmers of New Guinea, a man of heroic mould and apostolic devotion. Mr. Graham Balfour writes: "For Mr. Chalmers, 'Tamate' of New Guinea, he felt a kind of hero-worship, a greater admiration probably than he felt for any man of modern times, except General Gordon."

My last illustration of Stevenson's Puritanism arises in reference to his attitude to the natives in Samoa. The missionary is always what is called a "pro-native"; the ordinary white man admits his *duties* to coloured people, but is very unwilling to recognise that they have, or ought to have, *legal rights*. The missionary seeks to prevent the so-called Black Peril, by Christianising, educating, and civilising the native; the ordinary European thinks that the white man's daily dread can be effectually dealt with by repression and punishment. The missionary does not advocate political equality for the uneducated, or social equality for the uncultured native—he only claims equal opportunities for both races; the ordinary white man seeks to avoid all troublesome questions by proclaiming the inherent inferiority of the coloured to the white race. Stevenson, in his long and brave fight for the native in Samoa, on the spot and in the *Times* newspaper, against the German administrators, the Chief Justice Cederkrantz and Baron Senfit von Pilsach, the President of the Council, took essentially the view of the modern, enlightened missionary, who sympathises with Stevenson's advice given to a missionary: "See that you always develop the native customs, barbarous as they may be. Remember that all you can do is to civilise the man in the line of his own civilisation."

From 1890 to 1894, during his four years' residence in Samoa, he was no mere "Tusitala," a teller of tales. He was the natives' friend and defender, displaying towards that fine-looking, intelligent, and well-mannered race "a spirit of affectionate kindness, tempered with firm justice."

There was deep significance in the title they gave the road they made for him, "The Road of the Loving Hearts."

Stevenson learned much from the Samoan Islands and their peoples, and the climate and some of their conditions of life there suited his health. It is often said that he owed his comparative fitness for work, and that we, therefore, owe his later writings, to the climate, and to the free and unconventional life he led in Samoa. Now, it seems clear that, as he himself said, he could have found as favourable health conditions in Europe or in California, or, if not, at some place on the highway of traffic, where his friends could have visited him, and where he would have been in touch with the world of books. In these directions, the Samoan conditions, however fully they suited his wife and step-children, had very serious drawbacks for his work and his health.

As to his work, Stevenson's literary output was not like Wordsworth's, the product of solitary communion with Nature, independent of cultured society and of other men's writings. His iron needed to be sharpened with iron, by contact with minds of equal or greater culture. At Vailima he was tenderly and wisely ministered to by devoted and clever people, but not by his equals in intellect or culture. It is not good for anybody's mental growth and perspective to be the undisputed cock of the walk. Stevenson was peculiarly responsive to and dependent upon his company and his surroundings.

As to access to literature, an idea would strike Louis for a new book. He wanted at once, by consulting with experts and wide reading to explore time and place, habits, customs, superstitions, atmosphere, in short, to dig himself into the time about which he meant to write. But there were no experts in the islands, and it might take six months or more

for the necessary printed material to reach Samoa from Charles Baxter in Edinburgh, or from Sidney Colvin in London; by which time his interest and his enthusiasm had evaporated. The difficulties with printer's proofs are also obvious.

As to health, freedom from financial worries as to present needs and future provision was of vital importance. Almost anywhere else his income would have been ample for an easy mind. But the estate of Vailima was a perfect horse-leech for money, swallowing up large sums (more than £5000) for which neither he nor his heirs ever got any adequate return. And his yacht "Casco," his servants, and his open-handed hospitality to natives, and to European residents and visitors, resulted in financial anxiety and worry, which, as well as the incessant drain caused by the development of the estate, are reflected in many of his letters, published and unpublished. The strain of these anxieties was materially increased by the political troubles with which he was not competent to deal.

Nor was this all. Louis' delicate digestion unfitted him to feast on equal terms with visitors and natives in robust health at his own table or at native gatherings. And even if, with his high-strung, nervous temperament, he should not have been a total abstainer from alcohol and nicotine, any form of these drugs required to be used in his case with more than ordinary—with extreme—moderation! His open table at Vailima, and the prolonged native feasts, at which, as uncrowned King of the Islands, he was a frequent and honoured guest, made this impossible. It was not a question of vulgar excess, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, but of a style of living almost necessarily arising out of the place and the circumstances, which was detrimental to a man of Stevenson's constitution and condition.

II

COMING now to my personal knowledge of Louis Stevenson, I take first the three people who had most to do with his early days before I knew him, and whom I knew intimately in later years. I mean his father, Thomas Stevenson; his mother, Margaret Isabella Balfour Stevenson; and his nurse, Alison Cunningham.

R. L. S.'s Father (1818-1887)

In Speculative Society days, Stevenson's friends used often to dine at his father's house, 17 Heriot Row. He was very kind to us, interested in our concerns, without suspicion of patronage, a good talker and a close listener. Louis' description exactly corresponds with my recollection of him :—

"He was a man of somewhat antique strain, with a blend of sternness and softness that was wholly Scottish, passionately attached, passionately prejudiced. His talk, compounded of so much sterling sense and so much freakish humour, and clothed in language so apt, droll, and emphatic, was a perpetual delight to all who knew him."

In later years, in the Courts, and before arbiters, I have examined and cross-examined Mr. Stevenson, and consulted with him. He was a tower of strength to the side for which he found himself able conscientiously to give evidence. The judges knew that "Tom Stevenson" was not a "squeezable" witness. A devout man, he was deeply interested in theological as well as scientific questions, as appears from his book titled *Christianity confirmed by Jewish and Heathen Testimony, and the Deductions from*

Is this R. L. S. at 16?

(See page 29.)

Physical Science. He had a strong artistic sense, of which I have at Swanston a curious evidence in the "Ready Reckoner," which he carried in his pocket. This volume had been inserted by him into ancient Spanish binding, so that in prosaic scenes, and engaged in prosaic work, he might always have a thing of beauty to look at. People entirely outside his ordinary interests took to him. Mr. Edmund Gosse met him in Braemar in 1881, and writes of him as "a singularly charming and vigorous personality; to my gratitude and delight, my companion in long morning walks." One of his nephews described him as "the kindest and quaintest of uncles."

Louis dedicated *Men and Books* to his father, "with love and gratitude." Even in times of friction and misunderstanding, father and son were always proud of each other and deeply attached. Mr. Stevenson was jealous for anything but his son's best work. In 1868 he withdrew the *Pentland Rising* from circulation; he forbade the publication of the *Amateur Emigrant*, the record of Louis' voyage across the Atlantic and on to California in 1879; and he condemned the *Plays*, written in collaboration with Mr. Henley, a verdict which the theatrical world has endorsed. Louis knew how much his parents had sacrificed for his sake. They took him to Torquay, to the Riviera, to Germany, and to Holland in his delicate boyhood. They cheerfully acquiesced when, in 1871, he quenched their cherished hope that he would continue the family tradition of national lighthouse service. They raised no objection when, without making any effort to succeed in it, he abandoned the Scottish Bar, for which his education and fees on entry must have cost them at least £1000, although this meant that they might have to support him. The circumstances of his marriage were far removed from their natural expectation. But, when they knew the whole facts, they received his wife with open arms, and treated her with confidence and affection to their lives' end.

So far as Stevenson was ever in money difficulties, this was due to his want of frankness in letting his father know his needs. When they became known, Mr. Stevenson at once telegraphed "Count on £250 annually." In any estrangement between them on the subject of religion, the fault, if fault there was, was as much due to Louis' jejune agnosticism as to his father's over-dogmatised faith.

Stevenson's change of name from Lewis, after his mother's father (a name shared with five cousins), to "Louis," after nobody, the pronunciation remaining the same, took place, I have no doubt, with his entire approval, but it does not appear to have been directly his doing. There was in Edinburgh a certain Bailie David Lewis, an able and devout man, a useful citizen, and a disinterested philanthropist. But he was as one-sided a Radical and Dissenter as Thomas Stevenson was a Tory and Established Churchman. There was no personal animosity between them; I do not know that they ever met. But Bailie Lewis stood to Thomas Stevenson as the incarnation of everything dangerous in Church and State. His son must not be branded with the Mark of the Beast, and so, almost incredible as it sounds, in the case of a level-headed man like Mr. Stevenson, "Lewis" became "Louis"! Burns changed his surname from Burness to Burns when he was twenty-eight. Stevenson's Christian name was changed for him, from Lewis to Louis, when he was eighteen.

Louis' features and colour were not unlike his father's, but there was no similarity in frame. The son was narrow-shouldered, narrow-hipped, and flat-chested, "spidery," as one of his friends called him. His restless movements and eager manner suggested nervous energy, but not physical strength or staying power. The father was broad-shouldered and deep-chested, a man capable, without effort or injury, of great and prolonged exertion. He looked a man, every inch of him—grave, calm, determined. He was kindly and humorous. But he had not the gay, optimistic temperament of his wife and son.

R. L. S.'s Mother (1829-1897)

Stevenson did not inherit his mother's clear skin and ruddy complexion, but he had her delicate frame, her sunny disposition, her intellectual vivacity, her fondness for pawky Scotch stories and wholesome humour of all kinds, and her taste for literature. During his childhood, her chest and nerve troubles threw him much into Cummy's capable hands. But nothing made the old nurse more indignant than the suggestion that his affection for her in any way interfered with his love for his mother, "my incredible mother," as he proudly called her.

In appearance she was as distinctly "feminine" as her husband was "masculine," and she had an air of distinction and refinement which his rugged exterior did not suggest. Her bearing in repose was detached and serene; his was habitually absorbed and brooding. His was the charm of "the rare smile of a grave man"; hers the beauty of a mind and soul which had heard the voice, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

R. L. S.'s Nurse, Alison Cunningham (1822-1913)

Cummy's devotion to Stevenson, her influence over him, and his loyalty to her, are known to Stevensonians all over the world. Well-knit and robust, her features were regular and refined, and she had brilliant eyes, a bright smile, and a hearty, contagious laugh. When she died in 1913, in her ninety-second year, she was still plump and fresh-coloured, and there was very little grey in her wavy chestnut hair. Her manner retained its vivacity to the end. She gesticulated, as the Scotch seldom do, and would seize you by the arm to tell you something specially intimate. I remember her doing so when she said with a twinkle in her eye: "Mr. Henley was a curious man. But he was always very kind to me. Think of him presenting me with a copy of Boston's *Fourfold State*!" And the same action was repeated, when I asked her about her alleged refusal to marry

a man, to whom she was said to have been devotedly attached, on account of her resolution not to leave Louis. She scornfully replied, "Devoted to that man! Fiddlesticks!"

She had an inquisitive mind, a vivid imagination, and a retentive memory; and she was so "quick at the uptak" that visitors did not realise the extent of her deafness. Her combination of devout piety and fondness for fun is a commoner one in Presbyterian Scotland than the playwrights and novelists would lead the world to believe. In Louis' childhood she would turn with equal zest to the Bible and to Ballantyne's books for boys, to M'Cheyne's hymns and to Scotch ballads. She was a Puritan of the Puritans in religion and morals, but she was no ascetic. Her genuine interest in all things and all people pure, lovely, and of good report, as well as her liking for all things and all people quaint, humorous, and picturesque, her genial manner, and her unselfish life, commended the Gospel in which she believed and by which she lived.

It is a common mistake to suppose that she was "fond of children," in the ordinary sense of the phrase. The boys of the Taylor household, which succeeded the Stevensons in the tenancy of Swanston Cottage, in 1880, have told me there was no love lost between them, residing in the Cottage, and Cummy, keeping house for the "Waterman," her brother James Cunningham, in the Gatehouse, after she had left the Stevensons' service. But there were two boys for whom she would have gone through fire and water. The one owed her much during the first eighteen months of his life; she was his debtor for much kindness in later years—Walter Biggar Blaikie, LL.D., of Messrs. T. & A. Constable, Edinburgh, famous as an artistic printer, and as the greatest living authority on the wanderings of Prince Charlie during "The Forty-five." The sumptuous "Edinburgh Edition" of Stevenson's works, in twenty-eight volumes, suggested by Charles Baxter, his business adviser and lifelong friend,

Mrs. Stevenson, 25 years old, beautiful, dignified, genial, and her only child, Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson, 4 years old, nervously scowling at the poor photographer. (See page 28.)

and contrived by him and Sir Sidney Colvin, was produced in 1894, to Stevenson's great joy, under Dr. Blaikie's loving care. Alison Cunningham's other boy was Robert Louis Stevenson, who was not quite two years old when he came under her masterful yet tender care.

She did not coddle or spoil Louis. For his sake she would sit up all night and slave all day. But she told him his faults with Puritanic plainness and precision, and she let him know, by apt methods, that she would stand no nonsense and allow no disobedience. She had been an only daughter in her father's fisherman's cottage at Torryburn, an ancient fishing village in Fife, among a number of brothers. So she knew all about boys' ways, and boys' tastes, and boys' tricks. When asked what kind of a child Louis was, she would laugh and say, "Oh, just like other bairns: whiles (sometimes) very naughty." Louis himself said: "My parents and Cummy brought me up on the Shorter Catechism, porridge, and the Covenanters." A miscellaneous reader in her master's library, and a dramatic story-teller, she stored his hospitable mind, in childhood and in boyhood, with Scripture passages, tales of Bible heroes and of Bunyan heroes, stories of Scots Reformers and Covenanters, privateers and press-gang, and legends, in prose and verse, of pirates and smugglers, witches and fairies. Sir Sidney Colvin, the editor of Stevenson's correspondence, refers to her as "the admirable nurse, whose care, during Stevenson's ailing childhood, did so much both to preserve his life and to awaken his love of tales and poetry, and of whom, until his death, he thought with the utmost constancy of affection."

Therefore it was that Louis wrote of her:

> "My second mother, my first wife,
> The angel of my infant life."

Two Prizes and Six Portraits

I end the period of Louis' life before I knew him with mention of one of his two prizes, and with six portraits,

Thomas Stevenson, 48 years old, and his Son, 16 years old, at Peebles in 1866.

Notice that R. L. S.'s finger is between the leaves of the book. As soon as he can escape, he means to resume the reading from which he has been dragged. (See page 29.)

he wrote: "they have been to school and college, but all the time they have had their eye on the medal." I suppose Mr. Bowden was one of those teachers who, as his mother used to say, "liked talking to Louis better than teaching him."

(5) The sixteen-year-old Lewis, taken in 1866, the year of his earliest publication, *The Pentland Rising*, printed by Mr. Andrew Elliot, 17 Princes Street, Edinburgh.

A propos of this picture, which I got from Mr. Elliot, Mr. David Stevenson sent me the following letter:—

"84 George Street,
"Edinburgh, 24*th August*, 1914.

"Dear Lord Guthrie,—I think there is not the least doubt that the photograph is one of R. L. It would be taken in the old days, probably the early sixties, when the family used to go to Peebles, and when I used to fish with Louis in the Tweed. I have some photographs on glass, taken by my father, of R. L., my brother, and myself, blowing soap-bubbles at North Berwick.—Yours sincerely,

"D. A. Stevenson."

The reader must judge for himself. Mr. Graham Balfour, Louis' maternal cousin and biographer, thinks this is not a portrait of Louis; Mr. David Stevenson, Louis' paternal cousin and his playmate at the date of the portrait, is sure it is. The resemblance will be noticed to the undoubted Louis in the next portrait. At first I questioned the identity, because I did not think Louis ever wore a watch chain, and I did not know he fished. The next portrait shows a similar chain, and Mr. David Stevenson fished with Louis in the Tweed.

(6) Another of the sixteen-year-old Lewis, this time with his father. It is copied from a glass positive which Mrs. Strong sent me from California. Notice that the lad has had again to put on his Sunday clothes. His finger,

between the leaves of his book, shows that, as soon as he can escape, he means to resume the reading from which he has been dragged.

(7) A third of the sixteen-year-old Lewis taken at Peebles. The entire establishment has faced the camera —father, mother, Lewis, Cummy, two maids, and the dog. I found this picture in an old album belonging to Cummy.

And now I reach the period when I came into personal contact with Stevenson. The *Lewis* had been already changed to *Louis*, and the *Balfour* had been dropped from his name. I shall take the occasions separately :—

As a Fellow-Student at Classes in the Faculty of Law in the University of Edinburgh, 1871-1874

Stevenson was a student in the University of Edinburgh during two separate periods, first, preparatory to his entrance on the life of a civil engineer, and, second, on the abandonment of that career, as a student of law qualifying for the Scottish Bar. I often rubbed shoulders with him during the first period ; I knew him intimately in the second.

There is a characteristic incident connected with the first period. In 1866, Thomas Carlyle and Benjamin Disraeli were the rival candidates for the Lord Rectorship of the University of Edinburgh. The contest was a keen one. Louis, thick and thin Tory, voted for Disraeli ; I, detached Radical, for Carlyle. Carlyle was elected ; and, when he rose to address the University as Lord Rector, the Music Hall was packed with the usual noisy, excited mob of students. Loyal to tradition, the supporters, of the defeated candidate, Louis Stevenson prominent among them, were there in a compact crowd, bent on making a disturbance, which they duly did during the preliminary proceedings. But when the old man, throwing off his gorgeous Rectorial robe stood forward, no longer the

THE STEVENSON HOUSEHOLD AT PEEBLES IN 1866.

Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson and Louis are flanked by Alison Cunningham, 44 years old, and two maids, with the dog in the foreground. (See page 30.)

victorious candidate but an old Edinburgh student, who had risen to the highest place as a man of letters, not by birth or favour, but by his own genius and industry, to speak to us as a father would to his sons, it was too much for the lads. They and we sprang to our feet together, and cheered and cheered, and cheered again. The late Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, told me that he met Stevenson leaving the Hall, and chaffed him on the palpable inconsistency between his politics and his conduct. "Inconsistency! Politics!" quoth Stevenson. "Don't talk blazing nonsense, Fraser! What have politics to do with that glorious old Scot?"

At college we did not look for Louis at law lectures, except when the weather was bad. One wet and dark winter afternoon, a scene in the Scots Law Classroom remains in my memory. Stevenson, Sir Walter Simpson, and I gossiped while the Professor drowsily discoursed. Suddenly our whispers and smothered laughter seemed to acquire strange volume. The Professor had stopped, and was gazing silently and sadly at what we had thought our safe corner, while we (absorbed, like enough, in some farcical experience or wild project of Stevenson's) were a source of amusement to our fellows!

Such scenes misled us as to Stevenson's future. "All through my boyhood and youth," he writes, "I was known and pointed out as the pattern of an idler. And yet I was always busy at my own private end, which was to learn to write." And again: "I remember a time when I was very idle, and lived and profited by that humour. I have no idea why I ceased to be so. Of that great change of campaign, which decided all that part of my life, and turned me from one whose business was to shirk into one whose business was to strive and persevere, it seems as though it had all been done by someone else. I was never conscious of a struggle, nor registered a vow. I came about like a well-handled ship. There stood at the wheel that unknown steersman, whom we call God."

As a Fellow-Member of the Speculative Society

Stevenson joined the Speculative Society in 1868, and I became a member the year after. His name is 992, and mine is 1000 on the roll. We were joint presidents of the Society in 1872-73 and 1873-74. I was secretary in 1871-72, when Charles Baxter was librarian. Stevenson had a great affection for Baxter and confidence in his judgment. He paid him this compliment: "He is the only person I ever knew who can both make helpful suggestions and, at the same time, is able to hold his tongue when he has none to offer."

At the Tuesday night meetings he was a regular attender and a frequent speaker, and he used the rooms of the Society during the week to lounge in. He read in the well-furnished library, and delighted, above all, to discuss and discourse with any specimen of that genus, rare in a Scots university, a loafer. There were cliques even in that little company, limited to thirty members, and admitted by a drastic ballot. But Louis' catholic camaraderie made him the friend of all. In repartee he could take as well as give, and I do not remember an ill-natured remark of his to anybody or of anybody. Never once did we see him depressed. He would be absent, down with hæmorrhage from the lungs, and within a few days he would return, the liveliest of the lively, the gayest of the gay.

On one occasion I proposed that a bust of Lord Jeffrey, one of the Society's most distinguished members, should be brought from its obscurity in the lobby to a conspicuous place in the Inner Hall. The proposal was unanimously negatived, the opposition being led by Stevenson, who professed to doubt my identification of the bust, and reminded the Society, as was the fact, that it had lain in the lobby from time immemorial, with a large ticket on it bearing the scornful legend, "Who the devil is this?" Just before the next meeting, I, the secretary of the Society, bound to obey all its orders, had the bust removed

THE INNER HALL OF THE SPECULATIVE SOCIETY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

STEVENSON became a member in 1868 at the age of eighteen. He owed much to its friendships and intellectual stimulus. The large painting is Sir Walter Scott's portrait by Sir John Watson Gordon. Lord Jeffrey's bust is behind the reading-stand.

(See pages 32-35.)

from the lobby and placed in the Inner Hall, between the portraits of two former members, Sir Walter Scott by Sir John Watson Gordon, and Francis Horner by Sir Henry Raeburn. I well remember Stevenson's entry, his start of amazement, his shouts of laughter at my "superb audacity," and his motion of condonation and approval, which was carried with acclamation!

Another scene in the Speculative Society comes back to me after nearly fifty years. We used to assemble at eight, and often sat till long past midnight. About nine we adjourned for half an hour, when most members left "to buy pencils," as they gravely informed any new-comer, a euphemism for a visit to Rutherford's public-house in Drummond Street, otherwise (also euphemistically) known as "The Pump." Those who remained, round the cheery fire in the Outer Hall, consumed a weak decoction of cheap coffee, dashed with cold milk. This vile stuff was made by "Clues," our worthy old soldier servitor, in the mode practised by him in the Cape Wars early last century! When I became secretary, I resolved to kill Rutherford's Pump and Pencil trade. So I bought the most up-to-date French coffee-pot, and arranged with the famous Mr. Law, St. Andrew Square ("Coffee Law," he was popularly called), for a regular supply of the finest coffee freshly roasted and ground. Clues soon learned to produce an elixir which, with milk long boiled, brown crystallised sugar, and a top-dressing of whipped cream, brought down the Pencil trade to zero! Thereafter Stevenson never left us. He was fond of making fun of my teetotalism—he used to say, "No woman should marry a teetotaler, or a man who does not smoke,"—but he could not resist my French coffee! I suppose it was that kind of thing that led Charles Baxter to write to me in 1917: "You must remember that the *dusky muttons* of the Speculative always entertained a great respect and affection for you and your wisely tolerant ways with them."

It is easy, even after nearly fifty years, to recal Louis in

his black velvet coat, cigarette in mouth, the centre of a group round the fireplace, his thinness making him look taller than he really was, "thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably," in Henley's phrase. He was always in high spirits and always good-tempered, more often standing than sitting (and, when sitting, on any part of the chair except the seat), chaffing and being chaffed, capping one good story with another. He would discuss, with kindly mockery and picturesque gesture, men and women, art and letters, things past, present, and to come, anything and everything—except law!—"A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck," to quote Henley again.

Of the many score speeches, smart rather than serious, I heard him make, I do not remember a word. But a favourite subject of study has impressed on my memory his remarkable paper on "John Knox and his Relations to Women," now included in his *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, and his valedictory address in 1873 as president. In that address he has this curious forecast: "Who knows, gentlemen, with what Scotts or Jeffreys we may have been sharing this meeting-hall? about what great man we shall have curious anecdotes to tell over dining-tables, and write to their biographers in a fine, shaky, octogenarian hand? Yes, if we should have here some budding Scott, or if 'the new Shakespeare' should here be incubating his fine parts, we shall all, gentlemen, have had a hand in the finished article. Some thoughts of ours, or at least some way of thinking, will have taken hold upon his mind; some seasonable repartee, some happy word, will have fallen into the 'good soil' of his genius, and will afterwards bring forth an hundredfold. We shall all have had a hand, I repeat, at making that Shakespeare or that Scott."

If you inquire the fate of my companions in the Speculative Society, in relation to the expectations we formed of each other, I would reply that, while several of the thirty have done no dishonour to the Society in the Houses of Lords and Commons, on the Bench and in other walks of

life, clerical and secular, only two have attained the highest eminence, Robert Louis Stevenson in literature, and Andrew Graham Murray (Lord Dunedin) in law. Yet I am afraid our prophecy would have been the short-sighted one: "Graham Murray and Louis Stevenson are the cleverest men among us; brilliant fellows, both of them. But then each is the only child of well-off parents; they are far too well provided for. Besides, neither of them has the iron physique necessary for distinction at the Bar. Anyhow, they are altogether too casual to subject themselves voluntarily to the slavery which eminence demands."

III

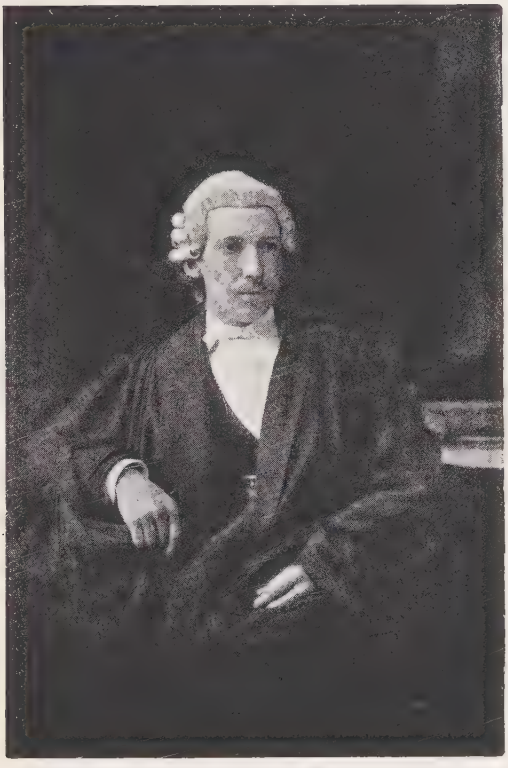
As an Advocate at the Scotch Bar

STEVENSON and I passed at the Bar in Edinburgh in 1875—he on 16th July, and I on 10th December. Of the batch who passed in the same month with him, only Lord Shaw of Dunfermline and Mr. Cathcart White survive.

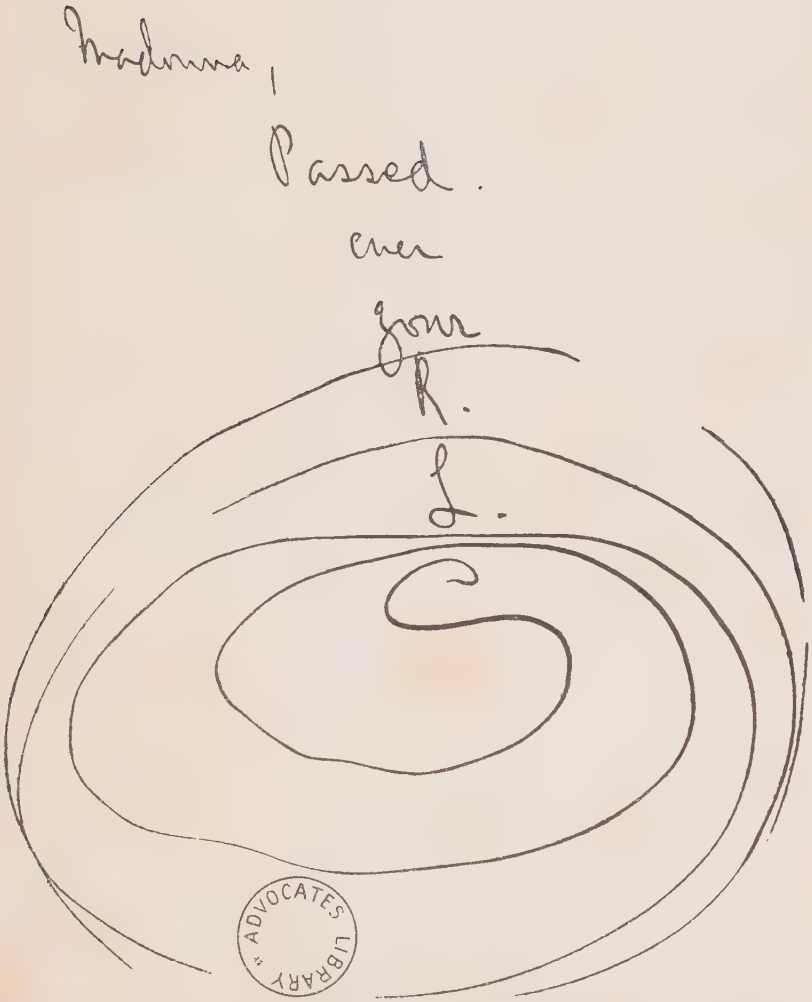
Passing at the Bar in Edinburgh involves four things:—

First: *Private Examinations.* Stevenson did not possess a degree in Arts, so he had to pass the Faculty examination in General Scholarship. From the records of the Private Examinators, it appears that, on 2nd November 1872, he passed in Latin, Ethical and Metaphysical Philosophy, Mathematics, French, and German. Neither of us had a degree in Law, therefore we both had to pass examinations in Civil Law, Scots Law, Scots Conveyancing, Constitutional Law and Constitutional History, and Medical Jurisprudence.

Second: *payment of about* £350, in fees, stamp-duty, etc. Of this sum a large part goes to the support of the Advocates' Library, with the valuable privilege of borrowing twenty books at a time. That Library, along with the British Museum, the Bodleian at Oxford, the Cambridge University Library, the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and, under certain conditions, the National Library of Wales, has the right to claim a copy of every book, magazine, and piece of music not privately printed. But the only two of these libraries which allow borrowing are the Cambridge University Library and the Advocates' Library. The lists show that Stevenson borrowed in 1878 a large number of books relating to the Cevennes, in con-



my dear Guthrie,
Your old comrade
Robert Louis Stevenson.



LETTER from R. L. S. to Mrs. Sitwell (now Lady Colvin) when he passed the examinations for the Scots Bar.

nection with his *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, published in 1879. Of the sum of £350, £55 went to the Advocates' Widows Fund, to which each advocate, married, unmarried, or widower, makes an annual payment. After Louis' death in 1894, his widow drew an annuity of from £60 to £70 a year till her death on February 19, 1914.

Third: *The Public Examination.* This consists of a *Disputatio Juridica*, held a year after the examination in literature, during which year the "intrant" must not engage, as a principal or as a subordinate, in any business or profession. The *Disputatio* carried on in Latin, was once the real examination, but is now a mere historic survival, perhaps the only instance in the United Kingdom, except the examinations for the priesthood of the Catholic Church, of a professional examination still conducted in Latin. The Dean of the Faculty of Advocates assigns a text out of the Pandects, and appoints two "Examinators." The intrant writes a short commentary on the text, which he usually copies from Pothier, or some other civilian. To this thesis he appends three propositions, known as "annexa." If the Examinators are satisfied with the thesis, the Dean appoints three "Impugnatores," and a meeting of the Faculty is called, for the *Disputatio.* The Dean, or his representative, attends, and half a dozen of the intrant's most idle friends. Each Impugnator reads out the prepared question put into his hands, and the intrant reads out the answers, which he or someone else has written. The solemnity is not increased by the evening dress in which (in the forenoon) the intrant must appear! I once acted the Good Samaritan to an intrant who had forgotten this rule, by lending him a swallow-tail coat. It was worth while: he is now a Peer of the Realm.

The late Lord Neaves would have favoured the retention of the *Disputatio Juridica.* Forty years ago, I was arguing before that witty judge against a technical objection urged by the late Sheriff Pattison, an objection

in the line which earned for that gentleman the sobriquet of "Preliminary Pattison." Lord Neaves sustained Mr. Pattison's contention, slyly remarking to me: "Mr. Guthrie, you must really leave us some of our good old abuses!"

Fourth: *The Ballot.* There is no recorded instance of an intrant being rejected. But the ballot remains as the symbol of the Faculty's right—once jealously fought for, but now undisputed by the Crown or by the Judges, for more than two hundred years—to admit its own members.

The practice is, however, not likely to be abolished. A case might arise for its proper exercise. Many years ago a member of the English Bar was disbarred and went to New York. Things became too hot for him there, and there was a rumour (probably a *canard*) that he intended to qualify for the Scots Bar!

The sphere of a Scotch advocate's activities is limited to Scotland, where alone, happily or unhappily for the world, Scots law is to be found. But, in another respect, the profession of an advocate in Scotland has an advantage over that of a barrister in England.

When an advocate passes at the Scots Bar he is not lost either to sight or to memory, as a barrister may be in England. He goes up every morning at ten o'clock to the Parliament House, and, on the floor of that historic hall, his presence—or his absence—in his working garb, is evident to every other advocate, and to those town and country solicitors who have cases going on in any of the Courts. His brethren and the solicitors soon form their own opinion as to whether the young advocate means business. They draw one conclusion from his presence and punctuality in the Parliament House, his attendance in the Courts and in the Law Room of the Advocates' Library, his readiness to act as a reporter of legal decisions, to write in legal magazines and encyclopædias, and to assist his brethren in the preparation of legal text-books. On the other hand, if he

leaves early in the afternoon, like Charles Lamb to make up for coming late in the morning, if he hangs about the centre fireplace in the Hall, and the newspaper and magazine room in "the Corridor," and does not frequent the Courts and the Law Room, they readily conclude that, while he is in the profession, he is not of it; that his wig and gown either symbolise deference to his parents' wishes, or are worn as the insignia of a good social position; and that he possesses the wealth—parental, personal, or marital —which, although the rule is not without illustrious exceptions, generally goes with disinclination for the strenuous career of a successful advocate. At the Bar, backing is of course always desirable, because it gives a man an earlier chance of showing what is in him, and saves him from the hope too long deferred that has made many a man's heart sick. There have been cases of men of only average ability, who have owed substantial success to backing, combined with commonsense, industry, and character. But backing is not a necessity for a man of real all-round ability, who has patience to bide his time, and grit to employ usefully his waiting months or years.

I doubt whether Stevenson ever seriously meant business at the Bar. I do indeed remember one morning in the Parliament House, when he came dancing up to me waving a bundle of legal papers in great glee: "Guthrie, that simpleton So-and-So has actually sent me a case! Now I have tasted blood, idle fellows like you will see what I can do!" No doubt he was pleased with the four complimentary pieces of employment he is said to have received, the fees for which did not run into two figures; but he must have known that his feeble frame and uncertain health could never weather the long sittings and the late sittings, and the nervous strain of the daily conflict, in over-heated, badly ventilated courts, with obtuse judges, dull juries, deaf witnesses, exacting solicitors, and unreasonable clients. He had no natural taste for law. He lacked what is perhaps the prime requisite for success at the Bar,

namely, that love of the business which makes easy the sacrifice of time and strength, of leisure and amusement, that would be intolerable in the interests of almost any other profession. Stevenson had not even the love for the curiosities of legal history and legal lore which fascinated Sir Walter Scott. Nor had he the comprehensive insight into human nature, the balance of mind and sobriety of judgment, which, with his industry and his predilection for law, might have made Sir Walter a great judge, if not a great advocate.

I do not know whether Stevenson knew his lack of another essential quality for success at the Scots Bar. In England, conveyancing barristers, sitting in their chambers, may make good incomes, without ever appearing in the Courts. In Scotland, advocates have no "chambers"; success is only open to the man who can speak. If such a person as a "born orator" ever existed, which I doubt, Stevenson was not one. And he did not attach the importance to the power of public speech, as distinguished from conversation and the written word, which will induce a man to take the moderate amount of trouble necessary to make the average man a tolerable, and the specially gifted man a fine public speaker. I doubt whether he ever heard or cared to hear a great orator or a great debater, Parliamentary, platform, or pulpit. Lastly, his jaunty style of utterance concealed the genuine modesty that underlay his seeming vanities and apparent posings, and conveyed an erroneous idea of flippancy and artificiality (what he himself called "my invincible triviality"); it would not have commanded confidence in client or solicitor, nor have carried conviction to judge or jury. Stevenson had great dramatic gifts, and great conversational powers; but he was ineffective as a reader, an actor, and a public speaker. His true and only vocation was the craft of letters. That was the only bar to which nature had called him.

R. L. S. and his wife, Fanny Van de Grift, in Edinburgh

My first meeting with Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson was at a dinner-party at her father-in-law's house, 17 Heriot Row, Edinburgh, in 1881. Louis met her at Fontainebleau in 1876, and they were married, in San Francisco, in 1880. Under middle height, and broad-shouldered, with strong rather than refined features, expressive eyes, and a wealth of dark hair, her photograph on the opposite page, taken many years later, shows Mrs. R. L. S. very much as I remember her nearly forty years ago. It was, I suppose, because I had been in the United States and was known to have strong American sympathies, that I was placed next to her at dinner. Her conversation disclosed a robust and vivacious personality, with vehement likes and dislikes, and deeply rooted opinions on people, places, and things, all of which she frankly expressed with quaintness and humour.

I subsequently met her at 17 Heriot Row, at family gatherings. One of these is referred to in the letter which follows :—

"17 Heriot Row,
"*Friday*, 16*th June* (1882).

"My dear Guthrie,—Can you manage to dine with us on Monday, at ½ past 6? We shall be all very much pleased to see you.—Yours sincerely,

"Robert Louis Stevenson."

These opportunities made it clear to me and to everybody capable of looking below the surface, that Louis had met, and knew he had met, his predestined mate, who would make him happier and more contented than any other woman could do, and whom he could make happier and more contented than any other man could do, through all the ups and downs, the bearing and forbearing, the illusions and disillusions, of married life. "As I look back," he wrote long afterwards, "I think my marriage was the

MRS. R. L. STEVENSON.

Sent to Alison Cunningham, after R. L. S.'s death, with the inscription "To Cummy, from her boy's wife, Fanny v. de Grift Stevenson." Mrs. Stevenson never used the word "widow."

best move I ever made in my life. Not only would I do it again; I cannot conceive the idea of doing otherwise."

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stevenson, Louis' shrewd and kindly parents, were evidently as firmly convinced of this as I was. They have never got sufficient credit for the large-minded and large-hearted way in which they dealt with their son's marriage, so unlike the union to which they had doubtless looked forward. Belonging to the straitest sect of the Pharisees (in other words, Presbyterians), Tories of a Georgian rather than of a Victorian type, and accustomed to the straitlaced ideas of Edinburgh Society, it needs some imagination to realise the aspect which Louis' marriage must at first have presented to them. Of Dutch extraction, Mrs. Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne was an American (she herself spoke of a Moorish strain in her ancestry); she was some ten years older than Louis; she had recently, under the unfamiliar rules of American law, divorced her first husband, to whom she had two children; her means were slender; and Louis had never made more than £300 a year, seldom anything like as much. Yet these most excellent people not only accepted the situation: in knowledge of all the facts, they took their daughter-in-law to their hearts. In 1885, Mr. Stevenson presented Skerryvore to her, the house occupied by Louis for two and a half productive years at Bournemouth, and he made Louis promise that he would "publish nothing without Fanny." They had their reward in the gratitude and devotion of their only child and his wife.

R. L. S.'s Candidature for an Edinburgh Professorship

Stevenson became a candidate, in 1881, for the chair of Constitutional Law and Constitutional History in the Law Faculty of the University of Edinburgh. From his casual treatment of the whole project, and the active part his father played in it, it seemed to me that the scheme was more Mr. Thomas Stevenson's than his son's.

Kinnaird Cottage
Pitlochry
Perthshire

My dear Guthrie,

I propose to myself to stand for Mackay's chair. I can promise that I will not spare to work. If you can see your way to help me, I shall be glad; and you may at least not mind making my candidature known. Believe me

yours sincerely
Robert Louis Stevenson.

June 30th /81.

LETTER from R. L. S. to me intimating his candidature for the chair of Constitutional Law and History in the University of Edinburgh. "Mackay" was Professor Æneas Mackay, LL.D., the previous occupant of the chair. The nomination to the chair belongs to the Faculty of Advocates. John Kirkpatrick, advocate, who was ultimately appointed by the Curators of the University, received eighty-two votes, and R. L. S. nine votes.

The part taken by his father is illustrated by the following undated letter, which he wrote to me :—

"17 Heriot Row.

"My dear Sir,—As it is time that something should be done about the proposer and seconder of Louis, I have to ask whether you would kindly agree to propose him. I asked Sir John Skelton to-day, but he had already declined a similar application from George Seton. He also told Seton that he never went to the elections, but he told me that, if he does make up his mind to go, he will vote for Louis. I have asked no one else, as I should like very much if you would agree. As to the seconder, I am at a loss. Could you suggest anyone ?

"Trusting you will kindly excuse this trouble,

"I remain, very truly yours,

"T. Stevenson.

"C. J. Guthrie, Esq.,
"Advocate."

Sir John Skelton was the historian, author of *Maitland of Lethington and the Scotland of Mary Stuart*; and Mr. George Seton, one of the candidates, was an authority on heraldry. The "election" referred to was the meeting of the Faculty of Advocates, at which persons are chosen, out of whose number the University curators select the successful candidate for the chair.

It is likely, although I do not remember, that it was on Mr. Stevenson's suggestion that I wrote the letter to Louis which produced the following reply (strange to say, fully dated) :—

"Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry,
"*July 2nd*, 1881.

"My dear Guthrie,—Many thanks for your support, and many more for the kindness and thoughtfulness of your letter. I shall take your advice in both directions; presuming that by 'electors' you mean the curators. I must see to this soon; and I feel it would do no harm to look

Kinnaird Cottage
Pitlochry.
July 27 81.

My dear Guthrie,

Many thanks for your support, and many more for the kindness and thoughtfulness of your letter. I shall take your advice in both directions; presuming that by "electors" you mean the curators. I must see to this soon; and I feel it would also do no harm to look in at the P. H. As soon then as ~~a piece~~ I get through with a piece of work that both sits upon me like a stone and attracts me like a piece of travel, I shall come to town and go a-visiting. Testimonial-hunting is a queer form of sport — but has its pleasures.

If I got that chair, the Spec. would have a warm defender near at hand. The sight of your fist made me Speculative on the past.

Yours most sincerely
Robert Louis Stevenson.

See page 44. The "curators" are the University Patrons, who have the ultimate appointment to the chair. "The P. H." is the Edinburgh Parliament House, now used in connection with the Law Courts. See page 47 for a discussion on the "piece of work" referred to. "The Spec." is the Speculative Society, of which we had both been active members.

in at the P. H. As soon then as I get through with a piece of work that both sits upon me like a stone and attracts me like a piece of travel, I shall come to town and go a-visiting. Testimonial-hunting is a queer form of sport—but has its pleasures.

"If I get that chair, the Spec. would have a warm defender near at hand! The sight of your fist made me Speculative on the past.—Yours most sincerely,

"Robert Louis Stevenson."

The "piece of work" referred to was possibly *Virginibus Puerisque and other Papers*, published in 1881, which originally appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1876. Or it may have been *Thrawn Janet* and *The Merry Men*, which he worked at when he was at Pitlochry in June and July 1881. Or was he already burdened by *Treasure Island*, begun in Braemar immediately thereafter?

The allusion to the Speculative Society having "a warm defender near at hand" (if Stevenson became a Professor in the University) refers to the running fight for special privileges, which the Society kept up with the University authorities for more than a hundred years. Among other questions periodically contested (all now happily settled), was the Society's alleged right to have the College gates kept open to any hour the Society chose, between midnight and sunrise!

We were hopelessly defeated at the election. Mr. Kirkpatrick, the successful candidate, who occupied the chair for twenty-eight years, received 82 votes, Mr. Seton 51, and Stevenson 9! Of the nine supporters I can identify five: Thomas Shaw, now Lord Shaw of Dunfermline; William Ellis Mackintosh, who became Lord Kyllachy; Christopher N. Johnston, now Lord Sands; Sheriff Guthrie Smith, and myself.

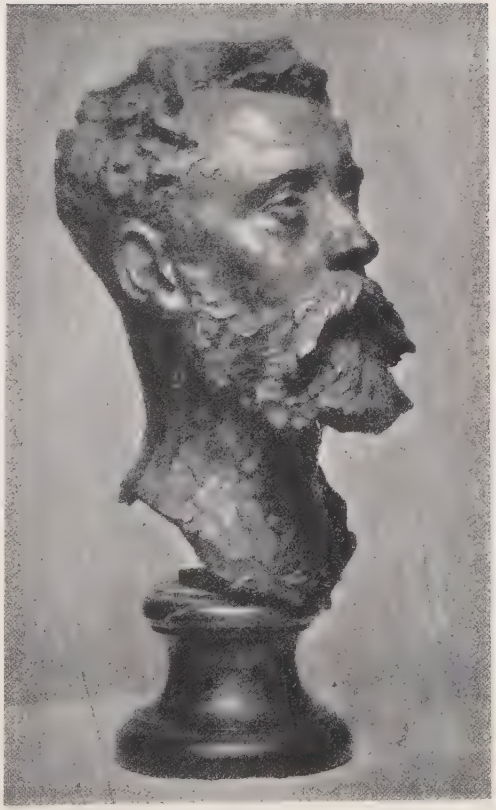
The project was quixotic. Stevenson had given no attention to the special subject, although he was a genuine student of Scottish history. I remember walking round

and round Moray Place with him, about the year 1876, when he sketched a book on the union of England and Scotland, which should discuss the success of that union as contrasted with the failure of the union of Great Britain and Ireland, although both were equally obnoxious to the majority of the lesser nations most directly concerned. Stevenson's linguistic attainments were not abreast of modern professorial standards. He could have got along in Latin and in French. But Mr. Kirkpatrick knew German, Dutch, and Italian, as well as French, and was a good classical scholar. In any case, Louis' reading for his first set of lectures, and then putting the material into shape, must have resulted in collapse and resignation. Even if he had weathered this strenuous preparation, the idea of Louis' regular delivery even of summer lectures in the trying climate of Edinburgh—that "blessed beastly place," as he called it—of his walking up to the University in a biting east wind, and lecturing in a class-room filled with easterly "haar (fog) o' seas" from the Forth, and all this plus the periodic setting and correction of examination papers, seems ludicrously paradoxical in view of his fitful disposition, unmethodical habits, and uncertain health. He was far too conscientious to retain a position to which he could not have done full justice.

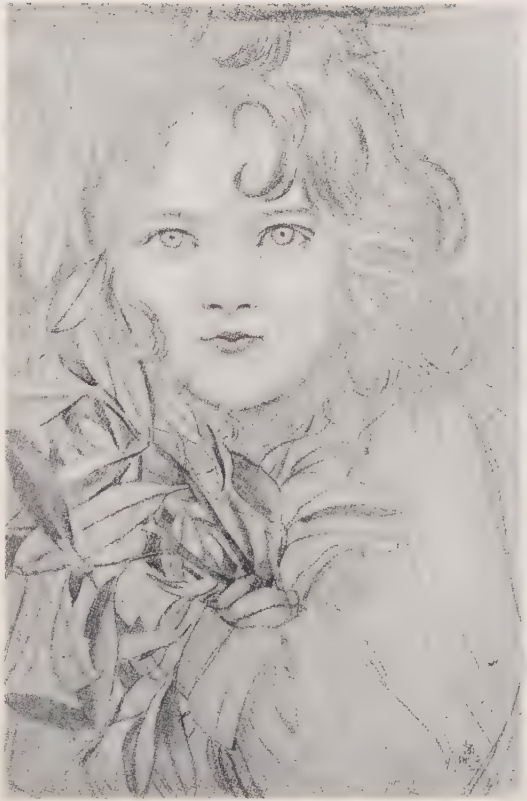
His Stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, at College in Edinburgh in 1885–1886

The only case in which Stevenson was the first and true inventor of a new form or mode of literary art was the *Child's Garden of Verses*, which were written about childhood, rather than for children. In its own way nothing could excel his reminiscence of "The Lamplighter," as seen from 17 Heriot Row:—

> "For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
> And Learie stops to light it as he lights so many more,
> And O, before you hurry by, with ladder and with light,
> O Learie, see a little child, and nod to him to-night!"



W. E. Henley.
From the bust by Rodin.



Their Daughter Margaret.
From a drawing by the Marchioness of Granby
(now Duchess of Rutland).
The beautiful and gifted child, who died at the age of

Mrs. Henley.
From a photograph.

He was the poet of the romance of childhood, but he had no children of his own. After the death of Henley's only child, in a letter to Henley, Stevenson wrote: "There is one thing I have always envied you, *and that I envy you still.*" The pity professed in Edinburgh for Stevenson, when it became known that he would have two stepchildren to support, was entirely thrown away. In loyal devotion, and in many forms of service, Isobel Osbourne (Mrs. Strong, now Mrs. Salisbury Field) and Lloyd Osbourne gave at least as much as they got. With their mother—"my Critic on the Hearth," as Louis playfully called her—they made candid and shrewd critics, if not of what would last as literature, at all events of what would arrest the public ear. He burned the first version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which he had drafted in the form of a story, and he rewrote it as an allegory, in deference to his wife's well-founded criticism. In his dedication of the *Black Arrow* to her he wrote: "No one but myself knows what I have suffered, nor what my books have gained, from your unsleeping watchfulness and admirable pertinacity." And in Mrs. Strong, Stevenson had at hand from 1889 an amanuensis, without whose skilful and sympathetic aid writings, which have delighted and helped multitudes of readers all over the world, would never have seen the light.

As I have mentioned, when Lloyd Osbourne was sent as a student, in 1885, to study in Edinburgh, he brought an introduction to us. Naturally he wanted to become a member of the Speculative Society, in which Stevenson to the end continued his early interest and pride. In that connection his stepfather wrote me the following letter (facsimiled on page 50), with many intimate touches about the old days, which, he writes, are gone, and for which, he hopes, we shall not be blamed:—

S Kenyone
Bournemouth
Nov. 15. 1885

My dear Guthrie.

This may be presented to you by my stepson, S. L. Osbourne whom I am anxious to get into the Spec. You may have some connection with the present Pharaohs; you should have, if ancient services are of any account in that republic of your youth; and at least, and whether or not you can do anything, I am glad to recall myself to your recollection

Yours very sincerely
Robert Louis Stevenson

C. J. Guthrie Esq.
Advocate.

LETTER from R. L. S. to me, introducing his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, then a student in the University of Edinburgh. See page 49.

"SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
"*January* 18, 1886.

"MY DEAR GUTHRIE,—I hear the lad has got into the Spec., and I write to thank you very warmly for the part you have played. I only wish we were both going there again to-morrow night, and you would be in the secretary's place (that so well became you, sir), and I were to open a debate or harry you on private business, and Omond perhaps to read us a few glowing pages on—the siege of Saragossa, was it ?—or the Battle of Saratoga ?—my memory fails me, but I have not forgotten a certain white charger that careered over the field of incoherent fight with a prodigious consequence of laughter: Have you ? I wonder, has Omond ?

"Well, well: *perierunt* but, I hope, *non imputantur*. We have had good fun.

"Again thanking you sincerely, I remain, my dear Guthrie, your old comrade,

"ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON."

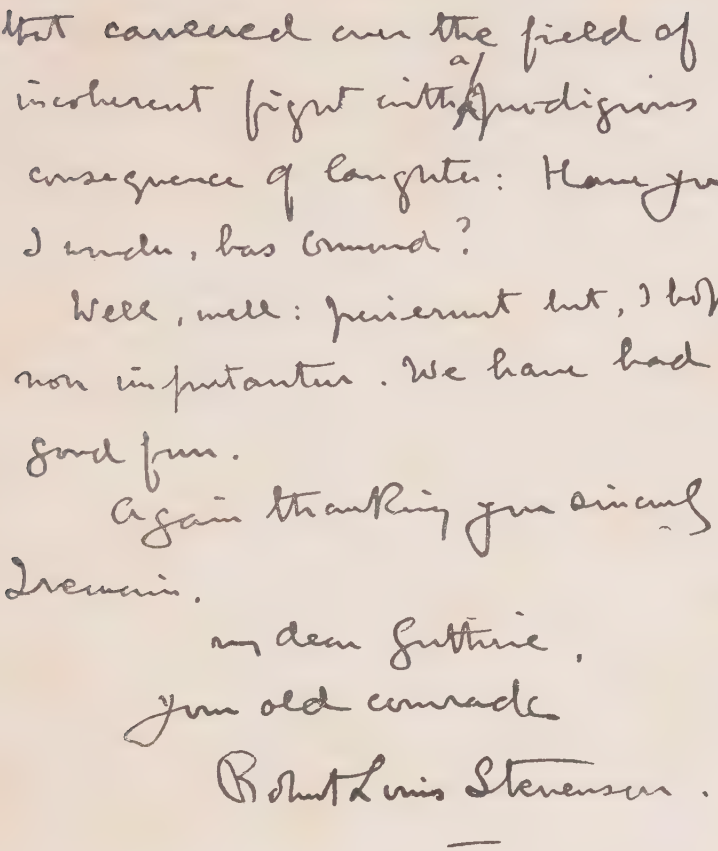
His reference to "private business" recalls the part of the Society's proceedings when the members aired their grievances, real or imaginary, against the Society's officials, and particularly against the Secretary. In his *History* of the Society, Mr. W. K. Dickson truly says: "In set debate Stevenson did not shine, if tradition may be trusted. But he spoke regularly, and took an eager, and often riotous, part in private business." As Secretary I came in for a good deal of sheet lightning, vivid but harmless. For instance, it unfortunately became known that my predecessor, Robert Glasgow Brown, afterwards the editor of *The Scots Observer*, then a brilliant youth of singularly noble presence, but not an accountant, chartered or unchartered, had frequently inserted shilling fines in the pounds column of the book which noted the fines due by members of the Society! Of course, this led to indignant demands why I, the succeeding Secretary and Treasurer, was not filling the Society's slender

Skerryvore
Bournemouth.
Jan. 18th 1886.

My dear Gosse,

When the Lad has got into the Spec., and I write to thank you very warmly for the part you have played. I only wish we were both going there again tomorrow night, and you used be in the secretary's place (that as well became you, sir), and I was to open a debate on hanging you on private business, and Osmond perhaps to read us a few glowing pages on – the siege of Saragossa, was it? – or the Battle of Saratoga? – my memory fails me, but I have not forgotten a certain white charger

See page 51.



that concerned even the field of
incoherent fight with a prodigious
consequence of laughter: How are you?
I wonder, has Omond?
Well, well: pericemus but, I hope,
non in pertantum. We have had
good fun.
Again thanking you sincerely
I remain.
my dear Guthrie,
your old comrade
Robert Louis Stevenson.

coffers by collecting the hundreds of pounds which stood in black and white against many members' names!

Mr. George W. T. Omond, the reader of the Saratoga or Saragossa essay, has, since these days, done valuable historical work, chiefly in connection with famous Scots lawyers and great legal Scottish families.

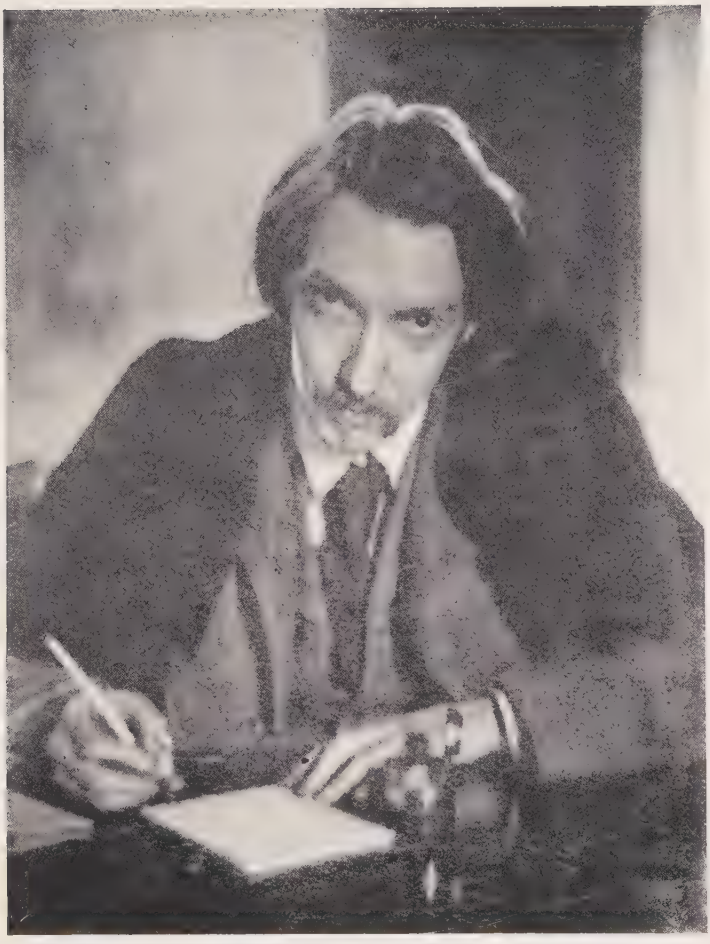
So ended my personal intercourse with Stevenson. He went to the United States the next year, on August 17, 1887, and never set foot in Europe again.

Of Stevenson's portraits in manhood, Sir James Balfour Paul says "there is not in existence a thoroughly satisfactory

likeness of Stevenson." In a letter to me, Mr. Charles Baxter goes further: "I regret infinitely that Fiddes Watt did not have the chance of trying his hand on Stevenson. The other artists, great and small, have produced mere caricatures. Alison Cunningham's portrait by Fiddes Watt shows what a real portrait of R. L. S. might have been." It is a great misfortune that we have no bust of Stevenson by Rodin, as we have of Henley. In Rodin's later years, I learned, through Professor Sarolea, that the old man had a vivid recollection of Stevenson, and that he thought he could make a bust of him, with the aid of photographs for details. Dr. Sarolea and I had a scheme to get Rodin to undertake the task—but The War supervened.

The two portraits which most recall Stevenson to me in two widely different moods, are Sargent's half grotesque but speaking portrait, and a delightful snapshot taken by Lloyd Osbourne, the latter reproduced on the opposite page. Perhaps, however, the best known portraits are the St. Gaudens bronze bas-relief in St. Giles' Cathedral Church, Edinburgh, and Count Pieri Nerli's portrait in oil painted in 1893 in Samoa, of which there are two versions, each claiming to be the original, one belonging to the Scottish National Gallery, and the other at Swanston. Sir Graham Balfour thinks the St. Giles bas-relief "the most satisfactory of the portraits of Stevenson." Admirable as a work of art, I share the dislike to it frequently expressed by Stevenson's mother and wife, and by Cummy, all of whom thought it suggested, quite untruly, the chronic, bedridden invalid, an individual with whom none of us ever for a moment associated him. Nerli's somewhat truculent representation was condemned by mother, wife, and nurse. Mrs. R. L. Stevenson sent me an acute criticism of it: "I do not like Nerli's portrait. If he had only been willing just to paint Louis, we might have had something worth while. But he would insist on painting the author of *Jekyll and Hyde*!"

Of Lloyd Osbourne's snapshot, intense and brooding,



R. L. S. AT 35.

From a snapshot taken in 1885 by his step-son, Lloyd Osbourne. Sir Sidney Colvin says of this portrait: "Happy accidents of lighting, attitude, and expression more than make up for technical imperfections."

R. L. Stevenson.

Photographed at Sydney in 1893, the year before his death. This portrait of the brilliant, humorous, quizzical, fragile Stevenson was sent by him to Charles Baxter in 1893, inscribed "To C. B. from R. L. S.," and was given by Baxter to me in 1907.

Sir Sidney Colvin says:—"In this amateur photograph made by Mr. Lloyd Osbourne in 1885, happy accidents of lighting, attitude, and expression more than make up for technical imperfections."

The only other portrait I give is one which I have at Swanston, bearing the inscription in Stevenson's handwriting: "To C. B. from R. L. S." Mr. Charles Baxter ("C. B."), to whom it was sent in 1893, presented it to me in 1907.

IV

I HAVE already indicated that my connection, since Stevenson's death, with people and places intimately associated with him has been due to my correspondence with Mrs. Stevenson at Santa Barbara, in California, to my personal intercourse with his mother and Cummy in Edinburgh, and to my tenancy of Swanston Cottage. I shall take them in their order.

Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson

While Stevenson owed most to himself, he owed much to men like Charles Baxter, Walter Simpson, and James Walter Ferrier in early days, and Henley (until their lamentable quarrel in 1887, after thirteen years' intimacy) and Sir Sidney Colvin in later life. He owed perhaps still more to women, although women count for so little in his writings. The wise friendship of Mrs. Sitwell (Lady Colvin) did much for him at a time when he was in sore need of strengthening and steadying. But the most continuous influence exerted over him by women was that of his mother, Margaret Isabella Balfour; of his nurse, Alison Cunningham; and of his wife, Fanny Van de Grift. He was singularly fortunate in their combination of devotion to him and appreciation and treatment of his weaknesses. But for the unceasing care of his mother and of Cummy, made effective by his father grudging neither money nor trouble for his benefit, he would not have survived boyhood; he would have left only a fleeting local tradition of a precocious, peculiar child. But for the equally unceasing nursing and care of his wife, as

well as her companionship, sympathy, and encouragement, he might have dragged out the useless life of a dabbler in literature, but we should not have had the enduring works on which his fame depends. She made concentrated work possible by choking off bores and keeping him free from distractions and worries, and by surrounding him with an atmosphere of cheerfulness and affection, even when she herself was depressed by illness and worried by anxiety about his health and his capacity for work. Every word said of her by Mr. S. S. M'Clure, from whom I have already quoted, is literally true: "Mrs. Stevenson had many of the fine qualities that are usually attributed to men rather than to women—a fair-mindedness, a large judgment, a robust philosophy of life, without which she would not have borne, much less shared with a relish equal to his own, Stevenson's wandering, unsettled life, his vagaries, his gipsy passion for freedom."

In my correspondence with her in recent years, long after Louis and his father and mother were dead, I had occasion to see the two sides of her character: the stern and noble side, which her husband's famous lines have immortalised:—

"Honour, anger, valour, fire:
A love that life could never tire,
Death quench, or evil stir,
The mighty Master
Gave to her."

She could be as formidable, if not relentless, as a foe, as she could be faithful and whole-hearted as a friend. She would not have stuck at trifles either to benefit a friend or to injure an enemy.

In connection with Alison Cunningham, I saw her gentler side, with which his verses end:

"Teacher, tender, comrade, wife,
A fellow-farer true through life,
Heart-whole and soul-free,
The august Father
Gave to me."

We shall soon have a just and adequate biography of Mrs. R. L. Stevenson by her sister, Mrs. Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez.

Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

When Stevenson's mother returned from Samoa after his death, we often met in Edinburgh. Theodore Beza has said that the death of good people is always premature. But in her case her friends had good reason to hope for many more years than were vouchsafed to her. Her early delicacy had vanished, and she had not suffered from residence with her son in Samoa, and her long journeys. "Twice torn up by the roots," as she expressed it, her eye was as bright, her smile as radiant, her sense of humour as keen, and her talk as cheery as ever. Her view of life remained thoroughly wholesome. It was the same at the end as in the days when she went a "pleasure trip" with Louis, and the luxurious passenger steamer turned out to be an unsavoury cattle-boat. She wrote home: "Louis and I have resolved to look on it as an adventure, and to make the best of it." Devoted to the memory of her husband and her only child, yet interested in present things and present people, hers was a most attractive personality. Professor Charteris said that, with all her past sorrows and losses, she always seemed to have "a mind at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathise."

Naturally, our talk often turned back to her husband, her son, her brother, Dr. George Balfour, the old Colinton, Swanston, and Edinburgh days, and the old Edinburgh people whom we had both known. I admired Sir George Reid's portrait of her husband. She thought it hard and stern, but she assented to my suggestion that a man's family love to think of him at the fireside or in social life, whereas the public prefer the man in action, forceful, and dressed for the part. She had photographs of Louis arranged chronologically in a folding case, beginning with the infant in her arms and ending with the advocate in wig

and gown. She told me that when she showed it to Louis she said to him, "There you are, Louis, from Baby to Bar. My next collection is going to be from Bar to Baronet!" "No, mother," Louis replied; "not from Bar to Baronet, but from Bar to Burial!"

My last tryst with her was not long before her death, in the rooms of the Speculative Society. I rather think this was her first visit, but she may have been there with Louis forty years before. She was keenly interested in the old-world hall, lighted by sixteen candles (one of which, by ancient custom of unknown origin, is always left unlighted) in an old gilded chandelier which Dr. Dickson, in his *History* of the Society, has called "our very Palladium." In these and not a few other ways the fine old crusted Society has changed but little from the description given by Hugo Arnot in his *History of Edinburgh*, published in 1779. We looked at the paintings and engravings of past members of the Society: Sir Walter Scott, John Gibson Lockhart, Christopher North, Francis Jeffrey, Henry Cockburn, and her own son, in literature; Lord John Russell and Lord Henry Petty, third Marquis of Lansdowne, in politics; Rev. Sir Harry Moncrieff, *primus*, Principal Baird, and Principal Rainy, in divinity; Dugald Stewart and Sir William Hamilton, in philosophy; Sir Astley Cooper, the surgeon, and Dr. James Gregory, of "Gregory's Mixture," in medicine; Thomas Addis Emmett, the Irish rebel; Baron Benjamin Constant, the French author and statesman; Lord Chancellor Brougham and Lord Blackburn, representing English law; and most of the Scottish Bench, especially those who had the singular good fortune to be beautified by Sir Henry Raeburn. She thought it an inspiring record, and was pleased with my suggestion that the inscription on Sir Henry Raeburn's portrait of Francis Horner, M.P., was equally applicable to her son: "First the ornament of this Institution, and then of his country." But what came most home to her was the Union Jack

above the mantelpiece in the Hall, which Mr. Charles Baxter presented to the Society. She had last seen that flag on her son's coffin at Vailima.

Her letters from the Samoan Islands to her sister, Miss Balfour (the incomparable aunt of Louis' *Child's Garden*), are full of charm, and make it easy to understand her influence over her son. Her portrait hung in Cummy's house. An American visitor remarked the beauty of her face. "Yes, mum," said old Cummy; "but she had a beautiful soul." "Be good yourself; make others happy," was the motto she once wrote after her signature, and she added, "That is the Gospel according to R. L. S."

In the group of the Stevenson family and native Samoans, taken at Vailima, Louis' estate of 400 acres above the town of Apia, her old-fashioned widow's cap is a conspicuous feature. It was characteristic of Louis' mother that she should adhere to her Scotch dress in the tropics, while at the same time she fell into the easygoing ways of her son's household, including a dispensation from shoes and stockings. She and the natives were on the best of terms. Her daughter-in-law chaffed her about her friendship with one of the old islanders. "You know he has eaten hundreds of his enemies." Her answer was, "Now, Fanny, you must really not exaggerate. You know quite well it was only eleven!"

Louis' wife was a devoted and skilful nurse, but in his later illnesses he turned from her and craved his mother's hand like a child. A dedication addressed to her runs:—

> "You too, my mother, read my rhymes
> For love of unforgotten times,
> And you may chance to hear once more
> The little feet upon the floor."

So it was at the very end. She died in May 1897. On 16th May, Miss Balfour wrote to Cummy: "About midnight I was told I might see her. Suddenly she said,

'Louis, I am coming,' and tried to get up. She then became unconscious, and knew nothing after."

Alison Cunningham

When I first came in contact with Cummy, several years after Mrs. Thomas Stevenson's death, she was living in a flat in Balcarres Street, South Morningside. She was very deaf, and did not catch my surname when I called. "There were two Charleses used to come about the Stevensons," she said. "There was Charles Baxter, and there was Charles Guthrie. I mind both the young men fine." When I explained my identity, I was taken to the old lady's heart, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne. At the time of my first visit she was in great distress at the death of her dog, not the first fortunate or unfortunate animal, I found, whose premature decease was directly traceable to excessive feeding by her and inadequate exercise by him. At her age, over eighty, it seemed unsafe that she should be living alone, as she was doing—the neighbours had noticed her door left open when she had gone into town; and she was at length persuaded to take up house with her cousin, Mrs. Murdoch, in Comiston Place, where she received every attention till her death in 1913. I well remember, when this was first proposed, how, reverting to her admirable Doric, she flashed round on me with an emphatic "Na, na! freends gree best sindrie!" (relatives agree best separate). The old lady, made of sterling stuff as she was, had a quick temper and a sharp tongue!

In 1908 I became tenant of Swanston Cottage, which the Stevensons occupied in summer time from 1867 to 1880. Cummy, then eighty-six years of age, delighted to spend an afternoon there among her old haunts. She would run rather than walk about the place, pointing out the addition built for the Stevensons; the Gatehouse, where she kept house for her brother, James Cunningham, the waterman, from 1880, when the Stevensons left Swanston, to 1893;

the five-fingered ivy planted by Mrs. Stevenson; and all Louis' favourite nooks and haunts.

My correspondence with Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson and with her daughter, Mrs. Strong (now Mrs. Salisbury Field), and with her son, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, related to two matters. Mrs. Stevenson was very fond of Cummy, and she believed that her husband owed much to the old woman. She showed her gratitude by thoughtful solicitude for her welfare. Mr. Thomas Stevenson left an annuity to Cummy, and this was handsomely supplemented by Louis' widow. On one occasion I suggested a certain addition, which was at once authorised by her, on condition that Cummy, who was very careless but at the same time sensitive about money, should not know of it. But for an accident, Cummy might have lived to the age of her mother, who died at a hundred and two. But she broke a thigh-bone, and only survived a few weeks. I wrote to Mrs. Stevenson, and she wired to her agent, Mr. Melville, of Messrs. Mitchell & Baxter, W.S., giving him *carte blanche* for the old lady's behoof. Her attitude to Cummy is well shown by the letter in which she wrote: "Please, dear Cummy, always let me know instantly if there is anything in the world I can do to add to your comfort, or your happiness, or your pleasure. The merry days are all past now. But we must try to be cheerful instead, and make others happy. You and I are the very last; and we must help each other all we can, till we, too, follow."

The other matter to which our correspondence related was the issue of certain books which Mrs. Stevenson thought treated Louis' memory unfairly, magnifying his eccentricities and minimising his great qualities and services to humanity. If her letters to me ever see the light, they will require some judicious editing. In one of them, after an outburst about one of these books, she says: "Please remember, dear Lord Guthrie, if I have shown more annoyance than is seemly, that Louis was my husband, dearly beloved and deeply respected, and I am pained to see his memory treated with derision."

Looking back on old documents, I see I replied: "Rest assured, my dear Mrs. Stevenson, that on the serene surface of Louis' beloved memory and enduring fame, the book has not stirred even a passing ripple!"

Swanston

I come now to my last point of contact with Stevenson, my tenancy of Swanston Cottage, and the collection I have made there of things connected with him and his.

Premising that there are three Swanstons which are constantly confused in references to Stevenson—namely, first, the secluded village of Swanston; second, the ancient farmhouse of Swanston; and third, Swanston Cottage, tenanted by the Stevenson family,—I shall amplify a little the history and description of the cottage given at the end of the *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, in Chapter VII. of *St. Ives*, in *The Pastoral*, in *Memories and Portraits*, and in the poem "Ille Terrarum." In these descriptions, while he selects, as an artist can and a photographer cannot, he never draws on his imagination. Sir Walter Scott was once asked why he took the trouble to visit the castles he was going to describe in his novels. He shrewdly answered, "Because if I draw them out of my head, my castles will be all the same!" The minute accuracy of the following abbreviated extracts will strike anyone who has visited Swanston Cottage:

"The cottage was a little quaint place of many rough-cast gables and grey roofs, the body of it rising in the midst two storeys high, with a steep-pitched roof, and sending out upon all hands one-storeyed and dwarfish projections. To add to this appearance, it was grotesquely decorated with crockets and gargoyles, ravished from some mediæval church. The place seemed hidden away, being not only concealed in the trees of the garden, but buried as high as the eaves by the rising of the ground. About the walls of the garden there went a line of well-grown

elms and beeches, and the centre was occupied by a thicket of laurel and holly, in which I could see arches cut and paths winding." (*St. Ives, being the Adventures of a French Prisoner in England,* Chapter VII., titled "Swanston Cottage.")

"The road finally begins to scale the main slope of the Pentlands. A bouquet of old trees stands round a white

farmhouse [Swanston farmhouse]; and, from a neighbouring dell, you can see smoke rising and leaves ruffling in the breeze. Straight above, the hill climbs a thousand feet into the air. The neighbourhood, about the time of lambs, is clamorous with the bleating of flocks; and you will be awakened in the grey of early summer mornings by the barking of a dog, or the voice of a shepherd shouting to the echoes. This, with the hamlet lying behind unseen, is Swanston.

"The place in the dell [Swanston Cottage] is immediately connected with the city. Long ago this sheltered

field was purchased by the Edinburgh magistrates for the sake of the springs that rise or gather there. After they had built their water-house and laid their pipes, it occurred to them that the place was suitable for junketing; the dell was turned into a garden; and in the knoll that shelters

it from the plain and the sea winds, they built a cottage looking to the hills. They brought crockets and gargoyles from old St. Giles', which they were then restoring, and disposed them on the gables and on the door and about the garden; and the quarry, which had supplied them with building material, they draped with clematis and carpeted with beds of roses. There purple magistrates released themselves from the pursuits of municipal ambition; cocked hats paraded soberly about the garden, and in and out among the hollies; authoritative canes drew ciphering

upon the path; and at night, from high up upon the hills, a shepherd saw lighted windows through the foliage and heard the voice of city dignitaries raised in song." (*Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, Chapter X., "The Pentland Hills.")

"Ille Terrarum

"Frae nirly, nippin' Eas'lan' breeze,
Frae Norlan' snaw, an' haar o' seas,
Weel happit in your gairden trees,
A bonny bit,
Atween the muckle Pentlands' knees,
Secure ye sit.

Frae the high hills the curlew ca's;
The sheep gang baaing by the wa's;
Or whiles a clan o' roosty craws
Cangle thegither;
The wild bees seek the gairden raws
Wearit wi' heather.

. . . . .

I mind me on yon bonny bield;
An' Fancy traivels far afield
To gaither a' that gairden's yield
O' sun an' simmer:
To hearten up a dowie chield,
Fancy's the limmer!"

(*Underwoods*, Book II., No. 21.)

Now for my amplification. In 1761, the town wells being polluted, and the water, taken from the Meadows as early as the sixteenth century, having failed, and the seventeenth-century supply of "the sweet waters of Comiston" having proved inadequate, the town of Edinburgh, under a private Act of Parliament, took two acres of ground from Mr. Trotter, the proprietor of Mortonhall, with the right to the hill water to the east of the watershed on Allermuir. It was then a new idea that all rights of property are contingent on the people's necessities, and Mr. Trotter resisted the town's proposal in Parliament and in the law courts. The town prevailed, subject, of course, to the proprietor's right to compensation. Wooden pipes,

consisting of logs bored from end to end and joined on the spigot-and-faucet principle, were laid from Swanston to connect the Swanston Water with the Comiston Water, which was already led into Edinburgh by similar pipes. At the same time, three stone buildings were erected on the two acres: first, a house with a stone roof containing a gauge for measuring and regulating the supply tapped from the Hare Burn, a quarter of a mile up the glen; second, a gatehouse for the residence of the "waterman," as he was called, with a stable, the abode, in the Stevensons' time, of their horse "Sultan," described as "an animal of infinite tricks and humours"; and third, the cottage for the municipal "junketing" described by Stevenson.

The cottage was originally one-storeyed and thatched, "a but and a ben," with a kitchen behind. About 1830 the town added a second storey, replaced the thatch on the roof with slates, threw out bow windows on both floors, and built a one-storeyed addition to the east. At the same time the architect Burn, at great cost, was restoring the exterior of St. Giles' on the fatal lines then in fashion. Apparently without protest from the Society of Antiquaries, or from men of taste like Sir Walter Scott, he deprived that historic building of all external appearance of antiquity by veneering the outside walls (except high up, near the crown) and removing the pre-Reformation crockets and gargoyles, which had adorned St. Giles' for five hundred years. Fortunately there seems to have been an antiquary in the Town Council, or among its employees, who took thirteen of the crockets and two of the gargoyles to Swanston Cottage, where they are now to be seen, more or less intact, on the roof of the one-storeyed addition, and on the wall separating the quarry garden from the tennis lawn, where in 1814 St. Ives, the French prisoner of war, saw them in the story, on his escape from the Castle of Edinburgh.

The Stevensons went to Swanston, as tenants of the town, in 1867, when an addition was built for them to the

west of the original house, consisting of a bedroom for Louis, a drawing-room, and a spare room. They usually occupied the cottage from April to October, and their tenancy ended in 1880. Dr. Taylor, 8 Melville Street, Edinburgh, was tenant from 1880 to 1908, and in that year I took a lease of the house and grounds. An addition was built to the north for Dr. Taylor; but otherwise the place remains as it was in Stevenson's time, except for

replanting, where trees have been blown down or have died, the addition of an outside bell, an extension of the kitchen garden, and the erection of a modest bungalow on the highest part of the ground, out of sight of the cottage. The three little gardens—the Rose Garden, the Queen Anne Garden, and the Quarry or Rock Garden—are unchanged, and the channel of the hill burn still runs through the garden, dry in summer and a strong stream in winter and spring. The ivied brick filter-houses on part of the original park were erected several years after the end of the Stevensons' lease.

Stevenson owed much to Swanston for health, for

leisure to think and read and write, for knowledge of nature and of country people, and for pure enjoyment, and he thought of it with affection all his life. From the tropics he wrote :—

> "Fair shines the day on the house with open door,
> Birds come, and cry there, and twitter in the chimney,
> But I go for ever, and come again no more."

He haunted the Quarry Garden. In "Ille Terrarum" he refers to it in the lines :—

> "Here aft hae I, wi' sober heart,
> For meditation sat apairt,
> When orra loves or kittle art
> Perplexed my mind ;
> Here socht a balm for ilka smart
> O' humankind.
>
> Here aft, weel neukit by my lane,
> Wi' Horace or perhaps Montaigne,
> The mornin' hours hae come an' gane
> Abüne my heid—
> I wadna gi'en a chucky-stane
> For a' I'd read ! "

He tried to learn golf in the park. In 1908 a joiner, erecting a fence for me, dug up an old-fashioned solid golf-ball—a "gutty"—with the rude initials "R. L. S." cut deeply into it by the provident Scot !

He loafed about the old-world village of Swanston, with its thatched and creepered cottages, quarter of a mile away, hidden up the hill among trees, where he gossiped with the hinds and shepherds, in their houses, in the fields, and up the hill. They liked the lad. But they "jaloused he wad never come to muckle," with his endless questions, his notes made in penny copybooks, and his heterodox opinions.

He climbed the hills. Swanston Cottage stands 600 feet above the sea ; Caerketton rises 900, and Allermuir 1000 feet above it. In the glen between them, at the

level of the Hare Burn, within two miles of South Morningside, his only companions were cattle and sheep, hares and rabbits, grouse, hawks, curlews, and lapwings. Ten minutes' climb up Allermuir brought him in sight of one of the most spacious views in Europe: the mighty Grampian Bens to the west; the Ochils and the Fife Lomonds to the north, where "populous Fife smokes with a score of towns"; and Edinburgh stretching to the Firth of Forth, with its many spires and its many hills —Corstorphine Hill, the Castle Rock, Calton Hill, Arthur Seat, the Braid Hills,—the beloved city, which he describes as "cragged, spired, and turreted, her virgin fort beflagged."

A spring at Halkerside on the slope of Allermuir will always be associated with Stevenson. He linked it and Allermuir with Caerketton in the poem written in Samoa descriptive of the view from Shearer Knowe, a little above Swanston, of Edinburgh and the Forth and the distant mountain rampart:—

> "The tropics vanish, and meseems that I
> From Halkerside, from topmost Allermuir,
> Or steep Caerketton, dreaming, gaze again."

He refers again to Halkerside and to the Hare Burn in a letter to Cummy, written from Bournemouth: "A bird is singing here, in the garden trees, as it were at Swanston. I would like fine to go up the burnside a bit, and sit by the pool, and be young again. Or, no, be what I am still, only there instead of here, for just a little.

"Some day climb as high as Halkerside for me (I am never likely to do it for myself) and sprinkle some of the well water on the turf. I am afraid it is a Pagan rite, but quite harmless, *and ye can sain it wi a bit prayer.* Tell the Peewies (lapwings) that I mind their forebears well. My heart is sometimes heavy, and sometimes glad, to mind it all. But for what we have received, the Lord make us truly thankful! *Do not forget to sprinkle the water, and do it in my name.* I feel a childish eagerness in this."

He had one of his dogs—Coolin, or Smuroch, or Jura—with him in his rambles among the hills. Coolin is buried at Swanston. He came to an untimely end in a fight with a collie twice his size at Hunter's Tryst, an ancient hostelry on the road to Swanston, once the howff of the Six-Foot Porridge Club, to which Sir Walter Scott belonged. In a letter of condolence written to Cummy, Stevenson said: "It was the death Coolin would have chosen, for military glory was more in his line than the domestic virtues!" Louis erected a monument in his honour, beside the tennis lawn, bearing this inscription:—

—Coolin—
Miti ac Blando
Qui
Viridi Senectute
Apud Trivium, ubi Venatores
Convenire solent
Casu quodam infelici
Diem supremum obiit

Hunc lapidem
In memoriam posuerunt
Moerentes amici
1869.

In Swanston Cottage there are some things which belonged to Stevenson, and many connected with him. We have one of his rifles, and his spurred riding-boots, the pair that appear in the photograph of him taken at Samoa the year before his death, which shows him gaunt, but full of vigour and vitality. On the walls of his bedroom many of his letters are framed—letters to me from Edinburgh and from Bournemouth; to Cummy from England, France, and Samoa, which she gave me in 1907; and a number to W. E. Henley, mostly dated from Swanston, which his widow subsequently presented to me. On the same walls are a lock of his hair when he was four years old, given to my wife by Cummy, and his portraits in infancy, boyhood, and manhood, ending with the last scene at Vailima when Sosimo, his body servant, watched through

the night beside his master's dead body. On the top of a bookcase containing the "Pentland Edition" of his works in twenty volumes, stands the "gutty" golf-ball for which he vainly searched forty years ago. Its loss perhaps quenched his ardour to acquire the art, for his ignorance of all sports was certainly understood to extend to golf.

The walls also show portraits of his father and mother, his wife and stepchildren, Cummy, and some of his closest friends, like Sir Sidney Colvin, W. E. Henley and Mrs. Henley, and Charles Baxter; besides some of his very miscellaneous heroes, including John Knox (see his paper on "John Knox and his Relation to Women"), the Bloody Braxfield (*Weir of Hermiston*), and Deacon Brodie, a magistrate by day and a burglar by night, hanged for his performances in the latter character in 1788, with his accomplice James Smith, an Englishman. The play of *Deacon Brodie, or the Double life* (the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in real life), was written at Swanston by Stevenson and Henley, and it is appropriate to find there the cabinet made by the Deacon's own hands, which stood in Louis' nursery in childhood, and was presented by him to Henley when he went to Samoa. He wrote of it: "In the room in which I slept when a child in Edinburgh, there was a cabinet—and a very pretty piece of work it was, too—from the hands of the original Deacon Brodie!"

The extended town of Edinburgh will some day creep out to the foot of Allermuir and Caerketton, and perhaps surround the Cottage and its grounds. Long before that happens I hope that the eastern end of the Pentland Hills, embraced in the farms of Swanston and Hillend, will be acquired by Edinburgh and made into a people's playground. One thing is certain: the day will never come when Swanston Cottage will lose its interest for the lovers of Robert Louis Stevenson all the world over.

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2/3